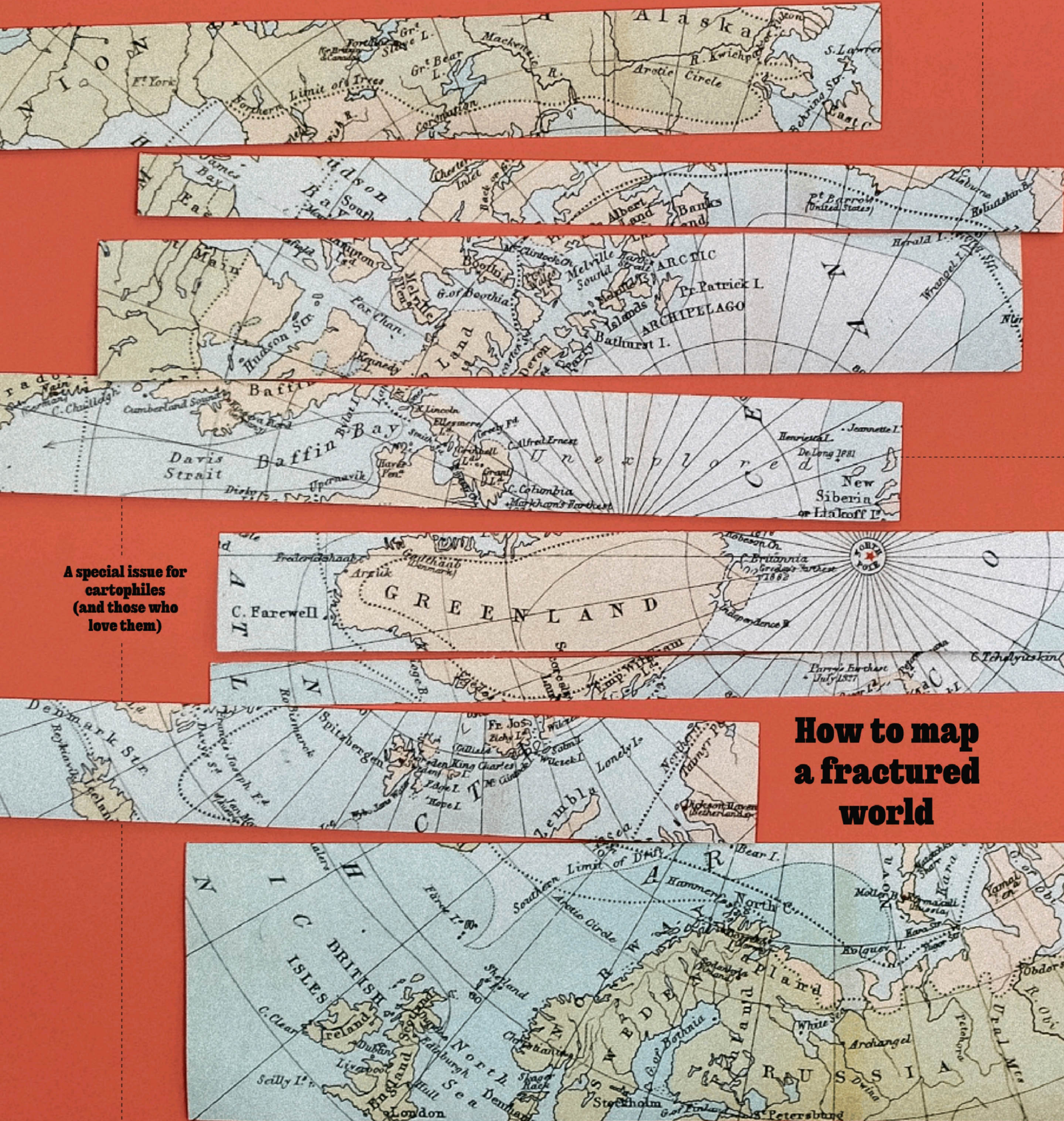
FEBRUARY 14 2026

FT Weekend Magazine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Chesterfield Inlet
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A special issue for cartophiles (and those who love them)

How to map a fractured world

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FEBRUARY 14 2026

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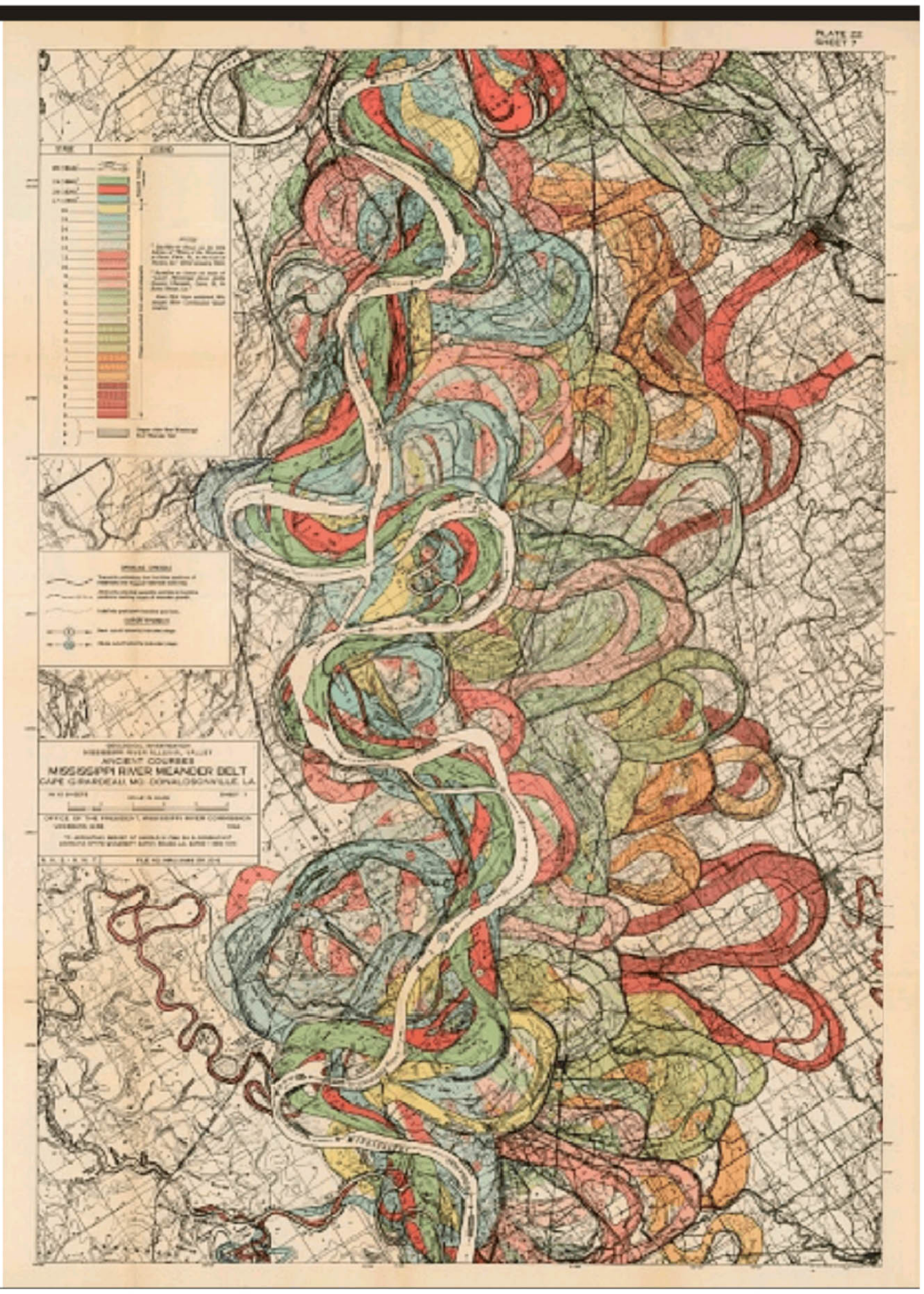
ON THE COVER
PHOTO-ILLUSTRATION BY
CARLO APOSTOLI, OSCAR ANCLIFFE


MISSISSIPPI RIVER MEANDER BELT
CAPE GIRARDEAU, MO.–DONALDSONVILLE, LA.

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MARGINALIA *by* NADINE REDLICH

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Letters

THE DEATH OF LIBERALISM

by Martin Sandbu

This is a rare bird in a daily newspaper: an essay whose author admits his own missteps, praises his ideological opponents and manages to synthesise competing claims into a cogent invitation for more debate. Just the best.

WHATEVERYOUSAY VIA FT.COM

I learnt a lot reading this. To me, it comes down to survivalism. If we've handed our morality over to economic globalism, we've admitted we don't really trust ourselves to have civilised moral debates. Only when the threat of human extinction is greater than the loss of individual dignity will we consider a more moral and collaborative conversation. In the meantime, does the market wall hold while we bash our own heads against it? The line between denialism and nihilism is insidiously invisible.

MAKKS VIA FT.COM

Martin Sandbu offers a compelling intellectual autopsy: post-1989 liberalism outsourced moral questions to markets, created a void and demagogues filled it. Grant all of this. Now what?

Michael Sandel's policy suggestions (removing tax breaks for skyboxes, banning phones in schools) are comically incommensurate with a crisis described as "the most important question of our time". If the patient is dying of organ failure, you don't prescribe a better diet.

BEOSHEEP VIA FT.COM

THE BIOHACKERS WHO WANT TO FIX THEIR VISION

by Tomas Weber

I'm a big biohacker and did a deep dive into this when my optometrist told me how in her native Singapore the rate of myopia in children was so alarming they initiated a public health programme to address it.

I came to the conclusion it wasn't likely to work and never bothered. The evidence seems to be that if you're a normal myopic adult, that's your lot. The research mainly persuaded me to focus on keeping my children glasses-free by dragging them outside every day and keeping their screen time strictly limited, and to give my own eyes some better care.

THE RED HAND VIA FT.COM

THE TYRANNY OF TARGETS

by Tim Harford

I found Tim Harford's article about quantified metrics really interesting, especially the argument that it has seeped into many parts of our lives. I don't own a fitness-tracking watch, but even I find myself saying, "You certainly get your steps in here, don't you?" when supply teaching in a large school. Or "I've definitely hit 10,000 steps today!" at the end of a day teaching nursery. Mentioning "steps" has become an icebreaker and conversation starter as so many people relate to the tyranny of this particular target.

ELAINE WHYBRO, CYMAU, WREXHAM

Tim suggests that we have allowed too much quantified data to rule our lives. Might I suggest that it is the rise of discrete data (through the digitisation of almost everything) as opposed to continuous, that is causing the problems. The former gives us Zeno's Paradox whereas the latter allows me to both complete the transfer from A to B, as well as enjoy the journey.

BOB FROST, DEAL, KENT

EUROPE FINALLY HAS ENEMIES

by Simon Kuper

I find it both inspiring and ironic that the EU is showing the US what an effective multicultural democracy looks like. For all its faults, Europe is looking increasingly sane to many Americans living through an insane administration.

QIRMAZI VIA FT.COM

People calling for tighter European governance and decrying national agendas are missing the point. Europe is fundamentally a democratic project and squabbling is part of the democratic process. It may take time and be messy, but that is working democracy and, you know what, it's difficult.

AULD SCOTS ENGINEER VIA FT.COM

MEZZOGIORNO, WESTMINSTER

by Jay Rayner

I don't think Jay will ever improve upon this line: "It's like looking under the table at a black-tie dinner to discover the host is wearing fluffy pink slippers." So much encapsulated in so few words.

PROFESSOR DOMINIC REGAN, BATH

FT Weekend Magazine
MEDITATIONS IN AN EMERGENCY

FEBRUARY 7
NOTES FROM A WORLD
ON THE BRINK

TO CONTRIBUTE
Comment on our articles online or email magazineletters@ft.com. Please include a daytime telephone number and full address (not for publication). Letters may be edited.

Jay Rayner's wonderful description of a gossamer lasagne with pork ragù transported me back 20 years, to when I was camping on an *agriturismo* in the Veneto. Dining with the Italian family, "Did you enjoy the lasagne?" the host enquired. "It was delicious," I replied. "Ah," she said, "horse." It was a rescue farm.

PAUL DAVENPORT, LONGTON

FOR FASHIONABLE WINE, LOOK TO THE LOIRE

by Jancis Robinson

For me, it's a very close toss-up between the Loire and the Rhône valleys, but the Loire wins. There is more variety and diversity in the wines coming out of that river system than anywhere else on earth.

AMERICAN PERSON VIA FT.COM

SHOULD CRITICS BE CRITICAL?

by Marina O'Loughlin

Speaking as the owner of a Michelin-starred restaurant, I value honesty. Nothing is perfect, and fair criticism that helps us to improve is always helpful.

MICHAEL UNSWORTH VIA FT.COM

An excellent piece about the importance of newspaper restaurant critics. I would add that as well as offering a critical assessment of the food, I read restaurant reviews as much for the quality of the writing as a guide to choosing a good restaurant.

DIVINGSFORPEARLS VIA FT.COM

SHOULD I CUT BACK ON DELIVEROO?

by Robert Shrimsley

I can't help thinking that if you don't have time to cook, you are doing life wrong.

ANDYO VIA FT.COM

I haven't had a delivery for more than a year. Eating in a restaurant is so much better: the food is fresh from the kitchen, there's a social side, there's no packaging to get rid of and it can even be cheaper. I also prefer all the money to be going to my local restaurant too.

ANDRES V VIA FT.COM

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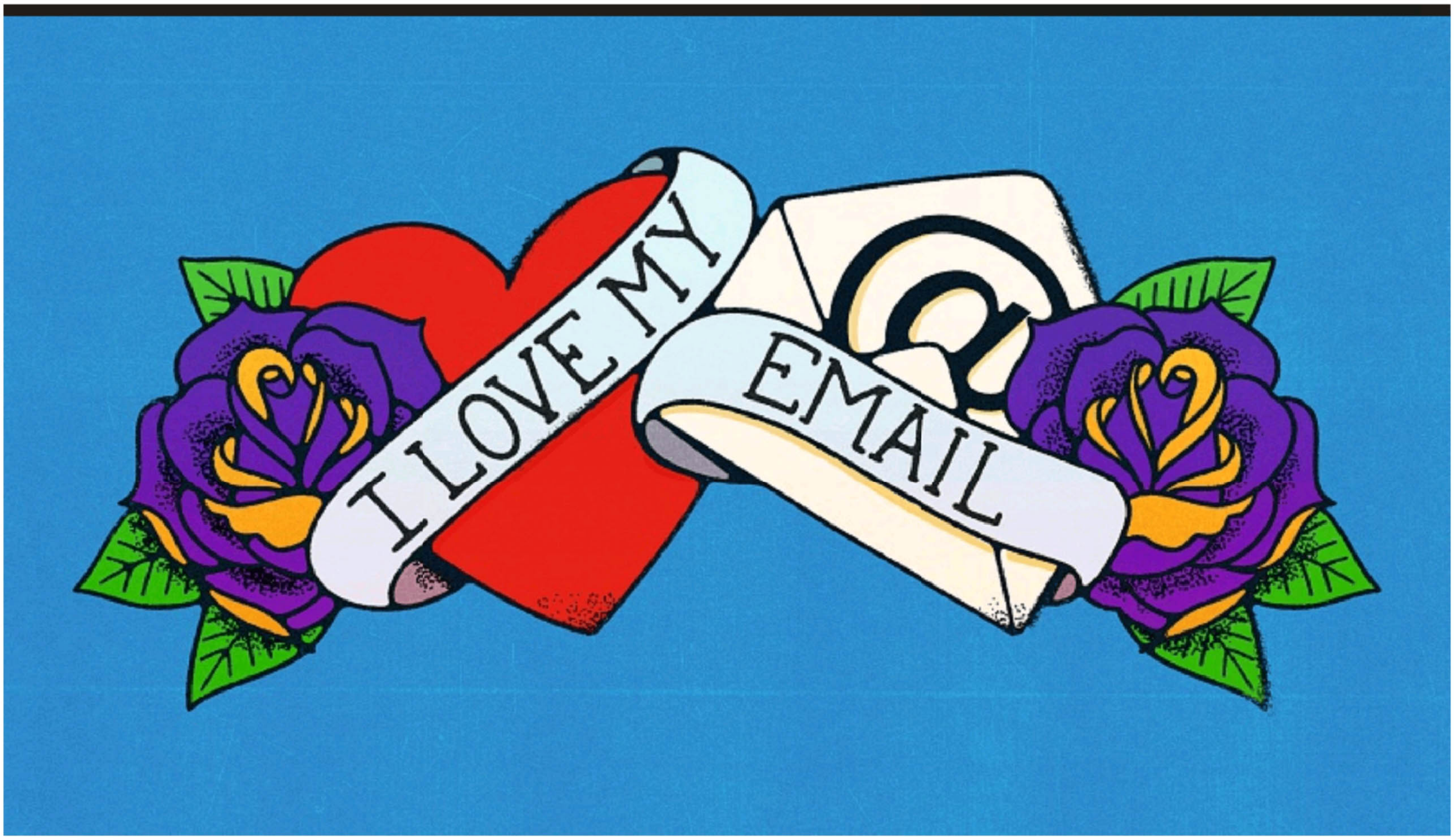
Intellect



Undercover Economist

Ping! The instant message missiles

by TIM HARFORD

ILLUSTRATION *by* ALBERTO MIRANDA

Am I the only one still using email instead of WhatsApp? Perhaps so. I find it ever harder to persuade my contacts – and more vexingly, my friends – to use email for important messages instead of interrupting me with the ping of an instant message. And my failure to persuade others is a problem, because communication is a two-way street. Your choices affect my life, and sending instant messages that should have been emails is like snacking on chocolate bars and then expecting me to clear up the discarded wrappers.

Email is flawed, to be sure – many emails should have been a conversation. And if a message is either urgent or utterly disposable, then instant messaging is fine. But as a serious tool for important communication, email remains underrated.

First, it's asynchronous. We don't live in the 1990s any more, so email doesn't beep for attention. The understanding is that if you send an email I will respond at a time that is convenient to me. Instant messages ping because – well, instant, right? And while I could switch off the needy noises from text or WhatsApp or almost anything, that would mean stripping the technology of a genuine use case in order to deflect some of the annoyance of people misusing it.

Second, email contains its own written record. You can check back, remind yourself of details, and read old attachments. It is easy to file or to tag. Admittedly, some instant-message platforms have a way to search for old messages – if you can remember which platform they were sent on. But as a retrievable record of communication it's hard to beat email.

(Reasons one and two explain why my wife and I will often send emails to each other across the room. It's not sociopathy; sometimes it's useful to provide notes and links for something we need to discuss, and it's always considerate not to interrupt someone who is busy.)

Third, my computer has a keyboard and my phone doesn't. Yes, I could install WhatsApp on a personal computer, but even if WhatsApp was well reviewed on Windows (it isn't), I wouldn't want to. It would be just another source of interruptions.

Fourth, it's easy to organise email visually. When I check my email, I see four folders: an inbox, a "to do" list, a "to read" list, and a "waiting for" list. When I check WhatsApp, I mostly see emojis. I am told that Snapchat is even worse.

> If your message demands attention, fine. That is why they call it 'instant'. But many don't

Fifth, it's much easier to customise the way email works – you can schedule future messages and set up filters, auto-replies and templates with chunks of text you regularly need to use. You can turn emails into calendar appointments with a click or two. Some instant-messaging apps offer some of this functionality, but all of it is commonplace on email, most of it for decades.

Finally, there is the enshittification problem: many instant-messaging platforms have an owner with market power and an ever-present temptation to degrade the user experience in pursuit of profit. If you don't like WhatsApp and would rather use Signal, you need to persuade your friends to embrace the new platform. This co-ordination problem gives WhatsApp's owner Meta considerable leeway to make your life worse before you get round to leaving.

In contrast, nobody owns email: it's an open standard. You may be relying on Big Tech to provide your Outlook or Gmail account, but you can switch easily if you don't like it any more. Nothing stops you sending messages from one email provider to another, so when you switch, you don't need to persuade your friends to switch with you. This power of exit is easy to take for granted – until you need it.

Of course, there are sometimes good reasons to use instant-messaging platforms. Their encryption is usually better than email; they handle photographs better; they can be fun for quick, disposable sharing of jokes or co-ordinating where to meet for a drink.

But that's not why so many people are sending texts that should have been emails. The attraction of instant messaging is selfish. Messages are designed to interrupt the person to whom they are sent. HEY, STOP! LOOK AT THIS!

If your message demands that sort of immediate attention, fine. That is why they call it "instant". But many instant messages don't – they're just inconsiderate interruptions. And because instant-messaging apps don't have a proper inbox, they're inconsiderate interruptions that can easily slip out of sight.

When the message is important but not urgent (that is, when the message should have been an email), then you're implicitly requiring the recipient to set aside their priorities immediately to respond to yours – at the very least, making a note to themselves to deal with your interruption later.

Cory Doctorow – the author of *Enshittification* and an email power user, captured how this feels in a recent essay: "getting an IM mid-flow is like someone walking up to a juggler who's working on a live chainsaw, a bowling ball and a machete, and tossing him a watermelon while shouting, 'Hey, catch this!'"

I find this watermelon toss infuriating. Life presents us with enough incoming watermelons already; we don't need people throwing them at us out of simple thoughtlessness.

In examining my own rage I think I've come to understand why I find this behaviour so upsetting. I object to being dragged into a mess of other people's making. The digital world is full of what are euphemistically termed "walled gardens", a term which conjures an image of a sheltered oasis, but in reality means a cross between a doggy toilet and a prison camp. That would be fine if I could stay outside on the open internet, but my friends and colleagues keep insisting that they're having a picnic in the garden and they would be so delighted if I'd show up.

Whenever I receive an instant message that should have been an email, I assume the worst: the person who sent it did so because they lost control of their email. Their inbox is overflowing; the searchable, fileable history of communications is no longer an asset but a guilty burden; they don't trust themselves to reliably deal with an email, and so they don't trust me either.

In other words, their email game is so weak that they might as well be flinging WhatsApps. And that drags me into their chaotic, goldfish-memory world.

Did I say that all these instant messages were like asking me to pick up your discarded chocolate wrappers? Let me change the simile. Your instant messages are like you eating the cheeseburger, while I have the heart attack.

DEPARTMENTS

REPORTS *from* LESSER-KNOWN
FT BUREAUX

DOMINION

In the pink

By the start of Victoria's reign in 1837 British maps of the world were already coloured red or pink for the British Empire. Mercator's projection greatly exaggerated the size of Canada and, to a lesser extent, Australia, offering a sense of dominance which was to grow mightily during the 19th century. In reality, the Empire consisted of several sparsely populated colonies of white settlement together with Caribbean islands and a number of strategically situated trading posts.

SOURCE: *THE VICTORIAN VISION*, 2001, EDITED BY JOHN M MACKENZIE

LISTS

Monsters and monstrosities of the 16th-century Carta Marina

- The Leviathan: a 300ft- long superbeast
- The Monstrous Pig: a creature like a wild boar with fins and a tail. Apparently spotted in the North Sea in 1537
- Ziphius: a giant swimming owl with a long beak
- Ambergris: green lumps depicting a highly prized mix of squid beaks and whale faeces

SOURCE: ATLAS OBSCURA, 2016

GIFTING

Year of the good-cheer souvenir

"In 1875, retired sewing-machine magnate William Emerson Baker held a launch party for his 'Sanitary Piggery' – essentially, a very clean pig farm that was part of his push for stricter food-hygiene regulations. Each of the 2,500 guests received a 'good-cheer souvenir': a map of the US in the shape of a pig. Maine is in the snout, Alaska is in the curl of the tail, and the hog's trotters are Florida and 'Lower California' (the Baja California peninsula). The border around the map celebrates pork dishes from each state; Louisiana is represented with gumbo, while California has the rather less familiar meal of bear steak, grapes, and ham sandwiches."

SOURCE: LORNA WALLACE, MENTAL FLOSS, 2025

LAST WEEK'S THEME: SPEED

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GALLERY

ZHANG KECHUN

by JOSH LUSTIG

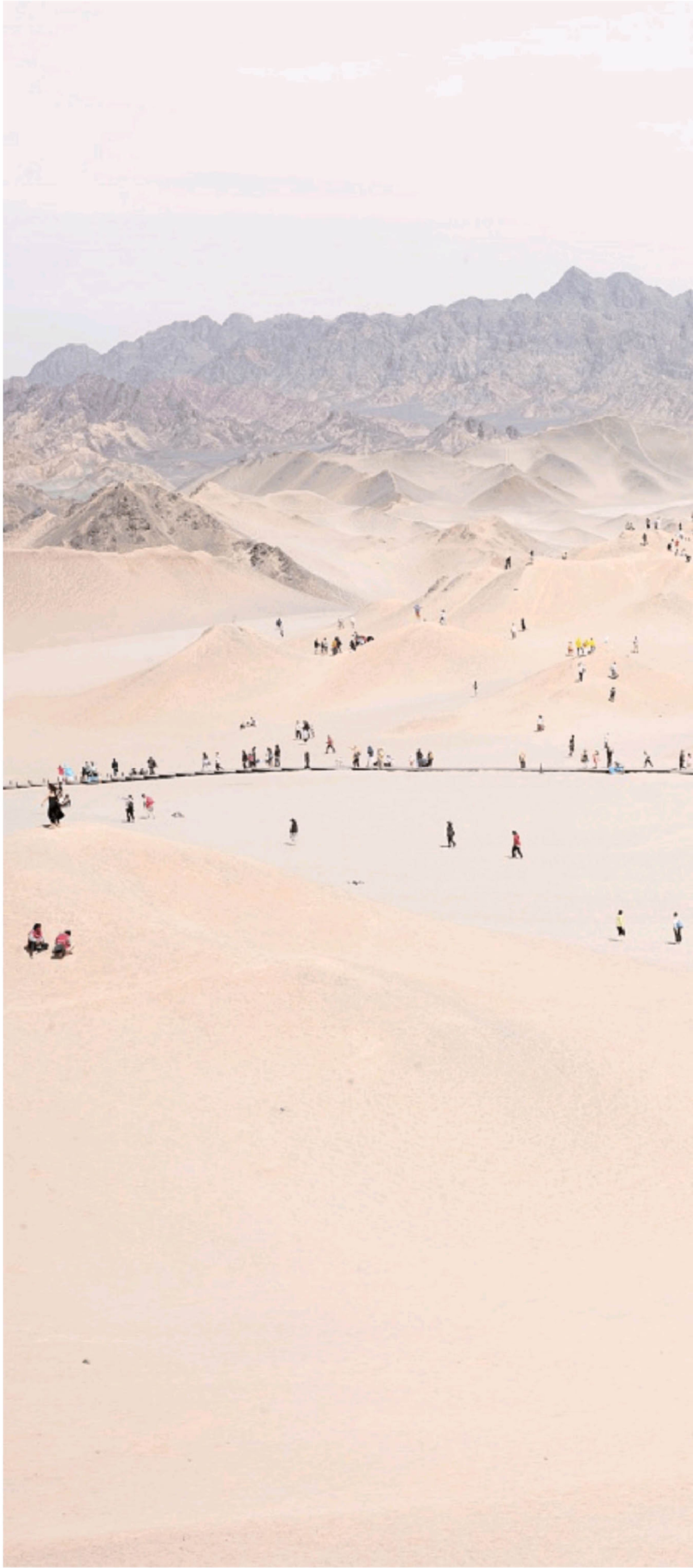
Translated, its Mongolian name means something like "the place on Earth most like the moon", and since opening to the public last year, the Heidushān mountains in China's Gobi desert have become a popular tourist destination. "Thanks to promotional photos on social media, tourists have flocked to the area," photographer Zhang Kechun tells me. "I arrived in the afternoon, bought a ticket and entered the scenic area. After the shuttle bus drove for over 10 kilometres, the undulating black mountains gradually came into view, truly like a watercolour painting splashed on the Earth."

After the Mongol conquest of China in the 13th century ended the Song dynasty and ushered in the Yuan, Chinese landscape painting went through a fundamental change. Known as "literati painting", landscape artists of the Yuan dynasty chose to depict the landscape to reflect their opposition to Mongol rule. Art became political. Paintings became more impressionistic, the brush strokes more emotive, the lines more calligraphic. Negative space was used to convey feelings of disquiet and conjure notions of the sublime. Human figures were usually tiny, dwarfed by their natural surroundings.

"A large part of my photographic work reflects my misinterpretation of Chinese landscape painting," Zhang says. The yellow hue of his photographs match the time-worn yellows of Yuan dynasty paintings. But it isn't just the colour palette. The anxiety that was being reflected in the paintings of the Yuan dynasty can also be felt in Zhang's photographs. The commodification of China's natural environment has ramped up in recent years. Busloads of tourists now descend on once-pristine landscapes throughout the high season. "Because it was summer vacation," Zhang explains, "the area was overcrowded with tourists, and the originally black mountains had been trampled into the yellow of the desert."

Zhang's images are a reflection of the current moment, where experiences are often measured by how Instagrammable they are. They depict the unease between the quest for natural beauty and artifice. Much of the Gobi desert that Zhang photographed for this series has been used for film sets, and the landscape is dotted with surreal reconstructions of ancient religious sites, as well as genuine graves that date back millennia to the Han dynasty. Abandoned towns and former oil extraction sites are slowly being reclaimed by the desert, just as footpaths and bus routes are laid in their wake. FT

"Zhang Kechun: The Yellow Desert" is at Huxley-Parlour, London until February 28; huxleyparlour.com



'PEOPLE TRAVELLING IN HEIDUSHĀN', 2025

World View

What depopulation looks like

by SIMON KUPER

ILLUSTRATION by HARRY HAYSOM

We know the trend, yet each new individual stat is still gobsmacking. The average Chinese woman now has 0.98 children. Last year, the country reported the fewest births since records began in 1949, Thailand the fewest since 1950 and France since the second world war. Fertility rates keep hitting unprecedented lows, then falling further.

The declines are steepest in one region: the landmass stretching from Europe to China, plus Japan. Populations here have already peaked, estimates the UN. It thinks China's will halve by 2100, although that now looks an underestimate. A study published by The Lancet in 2020 predicted even lower fertility than the UN's estimates, and forecast that many European countries and Japan would shrink by half, too. That's drastic. Imagine the world of our grandchildren in this northern belt: hotter, with AI having acquired currently unthinkable capabilities, and half as many people.

A quick caveat first. Readers with long memories will recall my writing last month that competition for land was intensifying in part because (according to the UN) the world's population should keep growing until the 2080s. That's true. However, most of that growth will happen in sub-Saharan Africa. So what might the depopulating places look like?

As it happens, we have a precedent on which to base this thought experiment. There was one period in history when western Europe's population approximately halved: during the "Black Death", the bubonic plague borne by fleas on rats, from 1345. For all the differences between then and now, it's illuminating to see what followed, as recounted by the Oxford historian James Belich in *The World the Plague Made: the Black Death and the Rise of Europe* (2022). Counterintuitively, the halving probably improved the lives of survivors and their descendants.

Belich starts by piling up evidence to show that half the population did die in that first wave – more than previously thought. Further waves continued for three centuries. England, for instance, only recovered its pre-plague population by 1625.

Back then, populations shrank through catastrophe whereas ours is shrinking by choice, yet in one way the two collapses were similar: humans disappeared, while all land and goods survived. That left more of everything to go round. The total economy may have shrunk, but it grew per capita. The boom times lasted until about 1500, when populations rose again and wages fell.

> There could be a glut of housing... as childless old people die with nobody to inherit their homes

Plague doubled the effective supply of homes. Survivors abandoned poor properties for better ones. As may happen in our future (and is already happening in shrinking Japan), "many farms and some villages were abandoned; towns and cities were not". Late this century, there could be a glut of housing even in cities as childless old people die with nobody to inherit their homes.

After the plague, writes Belich, "Most people ate and drank better as well as dressed better... Average meat consumption of townsfolk at least doubled." The English grew accustomed to sugar and gin. And with fewer children, parents invested more in each one's education – a trend today, too. Belich describes "post-plague competition for scarce manpower". Prices for slaves soared. More relevantly for our descendants, cities that before the plague had restricted immigrants began competing to lure them, offering citizenship or tax holidays. And new demographic groups took up wage work. Post-plague, it was women. In coming decades, it will probably be the over-seventies – which could alleviate the pensions crisis.

After the Black Death, even these revolutionary measures couldn't create enough workers, so society used its new wealth to invent or improve labour-saving devices. The handgun was a game-changer, while gunpowder "replaced human energy with chemical energy", and shipping was revolutionised, with bigger sailing ships making oarsmen redundant. All this added up to the "expansion kit", with which, starting in today's Canary Islands in 1402, Europeans colonised the world. Historians have long debated why Europe achieved hegemony. For Belich, "the biggest missing piece" of the puzzle is the plague.

Picture your street in 2100, presuming climate change hasn't washed it away. With half the population, some homes have been combined into vast single residences. Other buildings have been torn down, to make way for cooling mini-jungles. The future inhabitant of your home, born in 2026, now in their seventies – which by that time might be considered middle age – could find life cornucopian. FT

ELIZABETH HARROD & STEVEN MCRAE, SOLOIST & PRINCIPAL, THE ROYAL BALLET

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Essay

Discipline of devotion

What a new exhibition celebrating the Welsh painter Gwen John reveals.

By *Harriet Baker*

"Resolution to try and write a few lines every day," the painter Gwen John (1876-1939) recorded on a loose sheet of paper in the early autumn of 1911. She didn't have in mind a diary, exactly. Rather, she instructed herself to "Give a survey of your mind from time to time - its current and rhythm." In her notebooks, John had long been in the habit of writing things down: impressions of colours seen while walking in Paris; notes on technique for paintings; extracts from the books, often religious or philosophical, she was reading; drafts of letters she might never send. But that winter, she began to make notes of a different texture. In ink or unsharpened pencil, her hand loosening, she addressed herself.

Diaristic, self-reflective, mysterious, these notes describe John's internal weather, the ebbs and flows of creative feeling. And they reveal the extraordinary resilience she demanded of herself in living as a painter. "Live largely and deeply," reads one, dated February 2 1912. "Do not be afraid."

The loose sheets make up one folder of John's considerable written archive, which includes diaries, notebooks, exercise books and letters to correspondents including her brother, the painter Augustus John, and Ursula Tyrwhitt, her oldest and most trusted friend from the Slade School of Fine Art. (It was to Ursula she wrote, in February 1910, "I cannot imagine why my vision will have some value in the world - and yet I know it will.")

A selection of these writings has been brought out of the archive for the first time as part of a new exhibition of the Welsh-born artist at National Museum Cardiff. The exhibition draws attention to the later part of John's career, when, during the 1920s and 1930s, she stopped painting in oils to devote herself to producing a vast body of works on paper. John vowed these were "quite as serious" as her paintings. Yet this was also the period when she developed a distinct practice of writing alongside painting. John wrote in preparation for painting, but also to make a record of private thoughts and feelings. By turns technical, poetic and also to do with faith, her notes show an artist capable of finding literary forms for her visual imagination. Leafing through them, it is possible to trace her aesthetic concerns, but also to glimpse something more special - the thinking, dreaming, imagining mind revealing itself on the page.

"LOOK AT EVERYTHING, EVERY THOUGHT, ATTENtively." In 1911, John was at a threshold in her life and work. In her mid-thirties, she left central Paris, where she had lived for several years in a series of rented rooms (those plain, glowing interiors, with basket chair and open window, preserved in her paintings), for the leafier suburb of Meudon. And she broke away from the sculptor Auguste Rodin, with whom she had long been having an affair, towards a new kind of personal and creative agency. It marked a period of renunciation and solitude, one that brought her closer to her art, and also to her deepening faith. In her notes, she called it *la retraite*. "I must be a *sainte* too," she wrote. "I must be a *sainte* in my work."

In Meudon, John began to produce works in series, or by repetition. Views from her window, studies of trees, primroses. In the Church of Saint Martin, where she attended mass, she got into the habit of drawing her fellow worshippers. She recorded her impressions quickly, sketching in graphite or conté crayon, before returning to her studio to produce a finished work in gouache or watercolour. These congregational drawings, of women and children sitting on ladderback chairs, ears and noses in profile, comprise a remarkable portion of the works on paper. They show her developing concerns about form and colour, and they also reveal the role of writing in her creative process. Alongside drawing, John used her notebooks as preparation for the making of visual works. She developed an associative method for memorising and calculating colour. "To remember colours it is a great help to have each connected with something," she counselled Ursula. In her notes, she developed an Imagistic shorthand, in which colours find their visual and organic equivalents. Some are beautifully specific ("the green ball holding the snowdrop petals"), whilst others are less distinct and more tonal ("nuts and nettles").

On the page, John's notes read like poems. She laid them out simply, suggesting a degree of pleasure in clarity and precision, in the effort of reaching towards description via direct, tangible images.

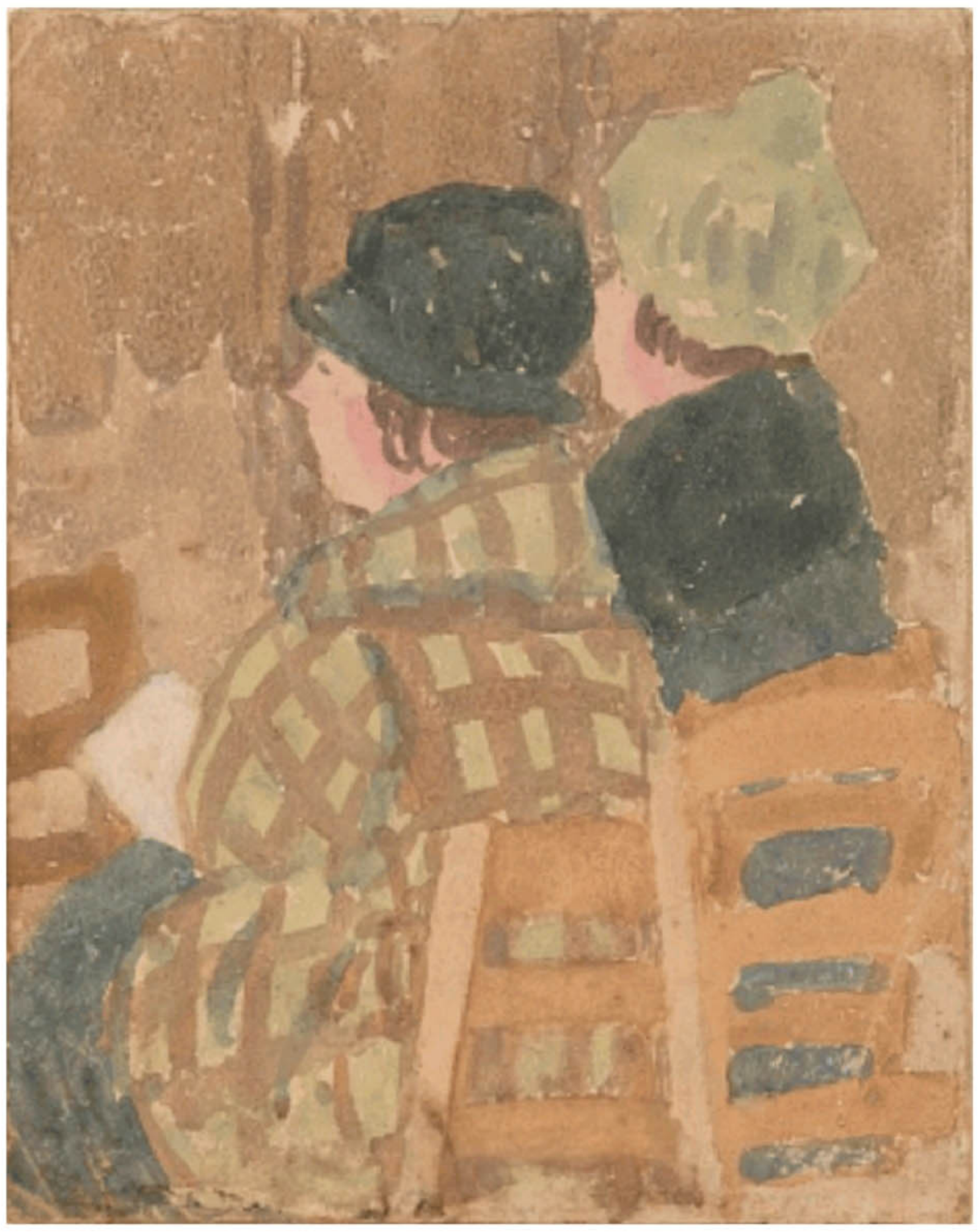
Leaves
April 1921
Nettle leaf yew tree cut
elderberry fish flying
lilac heart

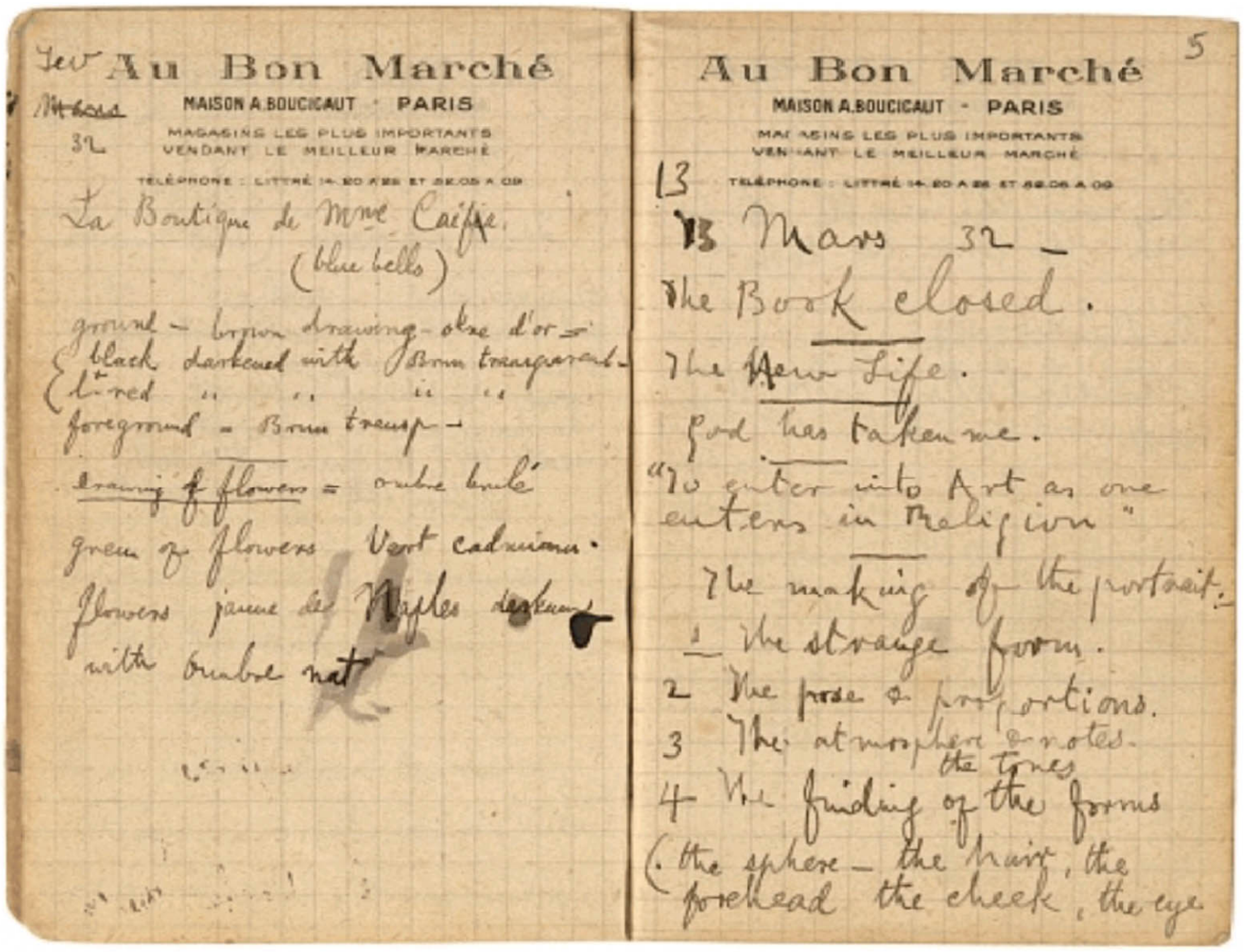
October 1921
Colour
Plaid cloak (green fawn) white nettles.
hedge. Blackberry leaves and flowers, straw
and stalks.
Church late afternoon.

Few of these notes can be conclusively matched with finished works, though Lucy Wood, senior curator at National Museum Cardiff, has found a study of two women sitting in church, one in a checked cloak. Seeing the finished study and the note side-by-side, it strikes me that John had crafted a metonymic and visual portrait. She might be likening the women to nettles or leaves, slender and quietly lustrous, their heads bobbing in prayer. Straw and stalks suggest the paperiness of age. There is no subject here, though by noting the occasion on which she observes the women, John might be placing herself at the scene, an artist working furtively but with pleasure in the glow from high windows.

John's works on paper were becoming increasingly abstract. In her studies of flowers or congregants, she reduced her forms and, unlike the gauzy mutedness of her oil paintings, worked to keep the colours flatter. Cornflower blue, lavender, green, chestnut, gold: they have a creaminess, a slight chalkiness, like bars of soap. She was attempting to look beyond an object's formal properties to something immaterial; to discover what she referred to as its "strangeness". This could best be achieved through repetition, drawing or painting the same thing over and over until its properties became unfamiliar. And she was concerned, too, with a work's "atmosphere". In her preparatory notes, atmosphere - explained as "the notes [colours] seen at a distance" - seems to be a quality apart from the formal elements of the work. It suggests an overall tonality, a harmoniousness, which also has to do with feeling. For John, writing down the atmosphere was a shortcut to the finished work she had in mind. A child in church, for instance, made her think of a "faded brown pansy".

Occasionally, her notes are opaque. One of her most enigmatic statements, repeated throughout her notebooks, refers to the "turning of the leaf". Is this to do with colour, atmosphere or faith?





Fev Au Bon Marché
~~Mars~~
32
MAISON A.BOUCICAUT · PARIS
MAGASINS LES PLUS IMPORTANTS
VENDANT LE MEILLEUR MARCHÉ
TÉLÉPHONE : LITTRÉ 14-20 À 28 ET 38.05 À 09

La Boutique de Mme Caiffe.
(blue bells)

ground – brown drawing – ocre d'or –
{ black darkened with Brun transparent –
{ l^t red " " " "
foreground – Brun transp –
drawing of flowers = ombre brulé
green of flowers Vert cadmium.
flowers jaune de Naples darkened
with ombre nat

5
Au Bon Marché
MAISON A.BOUCICAUT · PARIS
MAGASINS LES PLUS IMPORTANTS
VENDANT LE MEILLEUR MARCHÉ
13 TÉLÉPHONE : LITTRÉ 14-20 À 28 ET 38.05 À 09
13 Mars 32 –
The Book closed.
The New Life.
God has taken me.
"To enter into Art as one enters in Religion"
The making of the portrait:–
1 The strange form.
2 The pose & proportions.
3 The atmosphere & notes. the tones
4 The finding of the forms
(the sphere – the hair, the forehead the cheek, the eye

LEFT: 'TWO WOMEN SEATED IN CHURCH' C.1920S. RIGHT: NOTES FROM A POCKET DIARY, 1931-35

LLYFRGELL GENEDLAETHOL CYMRU – THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF WALES/AMGUEDDFA CYMRU – MUSEUM WALES

It suggests the attempt to capture change, the moment at which something begins to mutate and fade. Or, it sounds almost mystical, the turning of the self towards something great and new. A leaf is also a page. John's written archive can be so illuminating, intricately connecting her thinking with her practice. But like any shorthand, it was private, and there are things we will never know.

"A BEAUTIFUL LIFE IS ONE LED, PERHAPS, IN THE shadow, but ordered, regular, harmonious." In Meudon, John tucked herself into work and faith. Both required habit, discipline, a certain degree of refusal of the world. She took classes in Roman Catholicism (a not unusual pursuit for an artist in France at the time) from the local Dominican convent, and by 1913 had taken her first Communion. Commissioned by the convent, she painted a series of portraits of its 17th-century foundress, and began to work from the young nuns. They intrigued her, these women who had chosen lives of solitude and prayer. (In her paintings, she liked them for being "a little sulky and sad".)

As her notes progress, John's writing takes on a numinous quality. Pages are filled with prayers ("Make me the humblest…") and meditations, which appear to be written exercises – in her neatest hand – of a spiritual nature, beneath titles such as "Laws", "Rules" or "Thought for the day". Words such as "harmony" cross over from the technical (as in, an accordance of colour) into the spiritual, where it suggests the artist's quietude, her most desired state of being. These notes are often melancholy, and have the flavour of one writing to herself from the depths of isolation. And they can be fairly stringent. In the wake of her relationship with Rodin, John strove to suppress the "animal" and sacrifice "earthly life" for all the attributes of saintliness: the childlike, littleness, simplicity, timidity. "Too much care for material things," she wrote in one list, cautioning against herself. "Too much sensual *rêverie*."

> John's notes are often melancholy, with the flavour of one writing to herself from the depths of isolation

Are these notes a little disappointing? It can be dispiriting to read a woman suppressing her desires, and idealising a life of asceticism, self-censure and humility. ("Your pictures –" reads one note, "the transformation of your sins, your faults.") In accounts of John's life and art, faith is the aspect most often missing. It is unfashionable, and problematises claims of her as a feminist figure. But there is a way in which her saintly aspirations might be considered radical. In the late 1920s, she developed an obsession with Thérèse of Lisieux. Thérèse was one of the first saints to be photographed (often dressed as Joan of Arc), and her image proliferated in French Catholic culture. Drawn to archetypes (the saint, the nun, the convalescent, the pilgrim, all of which appeared in series in her paintings), John responded fervently to the image of this young religious woman. Using a photographic prayer card, she drew Thérèse repeatedly, and she followed her teachings, which encouraged her to find holiness in small sacrifices and in the ordinary. To John, determined to live alone and by painting, the life of this young saint represented not restriction, but self-possession and possibility.

One word which rolls through John's writings is *recueille*. "I am *recueille*, am I not?" she asked herself in August 1931. By this, she meant a quality of collectedness, a requisite for both spirituality and for painting. The proximity of these two things is interesting – the sense that for an artist, creativity might spring from the same secret place in which faith is nurtured. Both art and faith are underpinned by the same practices and habits of mind. They are akin to one another, and each is a life of vocation. What a saint asks of herself, an artist must ask of herself too. These, John listed: concentration, control, silence, effort; also, love. In her writing, the rules John sets for herself – to "put away secondary things", to "stand courageously alone" – might as easily apply to the artistic life as to the religious. Writing brought both aspects of her life together, a space in which to set out her thoughts and explore this complex, interwoven practice. Like her church drawings, and those of Thérèse, John's written meditations were exercises in a kind of mindfulness. And in their repetitiousness, they modelled a kind of worship. Sitting down in her studio, or to her notebook, she asked only, "Let it be unbroken – continuous."

And so we might think of devotion in its broadest sense, as a practice encompassing both prayerful and creative feeling. In her final years, John turned a loving eye upon her fellow worshippers. Sitting in church, she drew the children entering in pairs, the hatted women, the nuns with their starched cornettes. They enlivened her spirit. Because the religious life, in all its stringency, wasn't quite enough. "If I cut off all that there would not be enough happiness in my life," she drafted in a letter to her neighbour, Véra Oumançoff, who had scolded her for drawing in place of prayer. But John had discovered her own path to faithfulness, and some quiet happiness there was. FT

Harriet Baker is the author of "Rural Hours: The Country Lives of Virginia Woolf, Sylvia Townsend Warner and Rosamond Lehmann". "Gwen John: Strange Beauties" is at National Museum Cardiff to June 28

Drawing the lines

Has the map changed or have we?

By Oliver Roeder

Last November, the voters of New York City elected Zohran Mamdani as their mayor to international headlines. Running against a well-funded former Democratic governor and a local-celebrity Republican, the 34-year-old democratic socialist and former assemblyman won 51 per cent of the vote. The election was seen as a municipal repudiation of recent local corruption and an increasingly authoritarian administration a few hours down the rail corridor in Washington DC.

Much further down the ballot that day, past the races for comptroller and public advocate and district attorney, was Proposal Number 5. The proposal would amend the city charter to christen a new city map. As things stood in chaotic and sclerotic New York, the official city map existed on thousands of pieces of paper spread across five different borough topographical bureaus. The amendment would establish a single digital map under the sole auspices of the Department of City Planning. Without much prelude and with no fanfare, it passed with 74 per cent of the vote.

The landslide has no established explanation. Perhaps it was a predilection to vote yes rather than no, regardless of the question, or perhaps it was a taste for modernisation. Or maybe beyond that it was a taste for modern maps in particular – a need to know, accurately and precisely, where we stand. "We will better know who we are by knowing where we are," as Adam Gopnik put it in The New Yorker after the election.

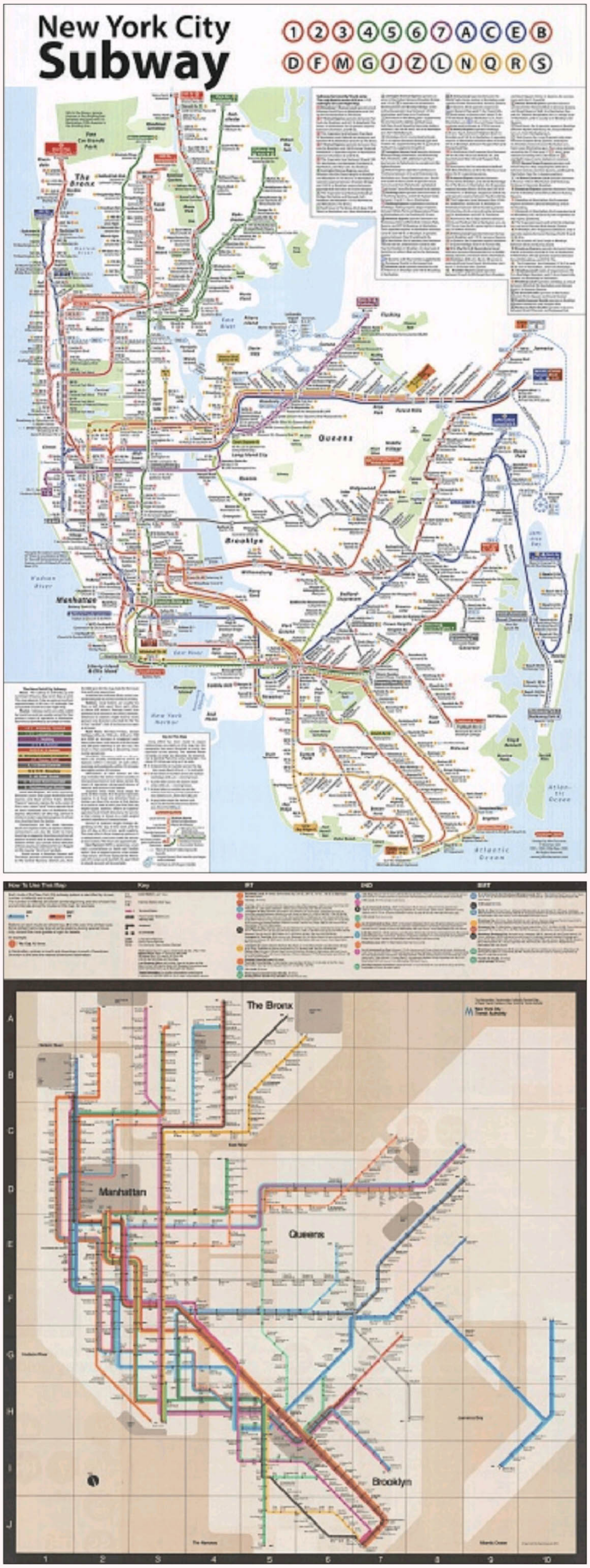
I tracked down one of the pieces of paper, the city map for the block where I live, dated March 1959. It is a beautiful document, fine, black print adorned with colourful pencil annotations. Outside my front door, someone had scribbled what looks like "Old Road on Special Proceeding". I do not know who wrote this or what it means, and nowadays my road is unremarkable.

The planning department tells me it is now in the early "fact-gathering" stage of this cartographic reshuffle, and is preparing for a "smooth transition without interruptions in service". Ho-hum. But there lies within this bureaucratic statement a set of deeper questions: what is the service provided by maps? And what does a map's transition signify? Has only the map changed or has the world?

FROM CHILDHOOD, MAPS PRESENT THE WOODEN feel of permanence. A globe sits on the sideboard. A teacher yanks down a spooled world from above the chalkboard, year after year. Road atlases are forever wedged in seat-back pockets. But maps, of course, could always be changing. In the short term, buildings and roads are built. In the medium term, territory is conquered and nations fall and are founded. In the long term, rivers change course and glaciers melt and mountains rise. In this era of conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East, the undoing of national and international orders, and technological upheaval, a change in maps appears to be accelerating.

The world is impossible to map perfectly – too detailed, too spherical, too much fractal coastline. A map is necessarily a model. In one direction, the model asymptotes to the one-to-one scale

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS, GEOGRAPHY AND MAP DIVISION; NYC MTA



TOP: John Tauranac's subway map of New York City. BOTTOM: Massimo Vignelli's 1972 version

FACING PAGE: CS Hammond & Co's subway system map of New York City, 1921

map from the Jorge Luis Borges story that literally covers the land, a map of the empire the size of the empire, which proves useless and is left in tatters across the desert. There is a limit in the other direction too, not map expanded to world, but world collapsed into map – pure abstraction on a phone screen, obscuring the real world outside, geodata for delivery companies and rideshare apps.

But if maps abstract the world, their makers demand and encourage a close association with it. There must eventually be a search for the literal ground truth. As the filmmaker Carl Theodor Dreyer once said, "You can't simplify reality without understanding it first." Cartography, in turn, informs interactions with the world.

"It's important for us to try to understand the world around us and not just rely on robotic cars and AI," Mikel Maron, a long-time board member of the OpenStreetMap Foundation, told me. "Like, look around! That's what excites me about mapmaking: it's an opportunity to try to understand what's happening. Anyone who's involved in mapping or geography, they're trying to understand something deeper about how the world works."

Maron compared OpenStreetMap, a collective of mostly volunteer cartographers, to the tiny, crucial piece in the comic *xkcd* on the fragile tower of internet infrastructure, quietly supporting swaths of digital cartography. And so it does, stamped in small letters in the credit line of maps of horrific destruction in Gaza or a shifting front line in Ukraine. Maron is particularly proud of the group's humanitarian cartography. In one week in late January, the OpenStreetMap community mapped some 50,000 buildings in flood-stricken Gaza Province, in southern Mozambique.

For Maron, maps and OpenStreetMap retain some of the promise and wonder of the early internet, the thrill of connecting to someone or something on the other side of the world. Wikipedia was an inspiration. Like that encyclopedia, much of its appeal and benefit lies in its audacity. How does one even begin to map the world, to boil the ocean down to an image?

"You have to be naive," Maron said.

HOW DOES ONE EVEN BEGIN TO MAP THE WORLD? 'YOU HAVE TO BE NAIVE,' SAYS MARON

AS WITH ANY DATA VISUALISATION, MAP-MAKING strives for truth but provides innumerable degrees of freedom, endless choices of inclusion and omission and emphasis. Maps, in other words, are arguments made by humans.

"We don't do enough to think of maps as cultural artefacts, you know, things that people have contributed to," James Cheshire, a professor of cartography at University College London, told me. "There are people behind them."

Sometimes very different people. The official city map will not be the only new map in New York. The city's transit authority recently replaced the subway map that rides in every train car with a version of a famously modern 1972 design by Massimo Vignelli. Now gone is the long-used design of a man called John Tauranac. In Tauranac's map, some loyalty was paid to the physiographical world above the subway: surface streets, the basic shapes of the boroughs. In the Vignelli, all attention is paid to the graph-theory mathematics of the train lines, with serious side-effects above. Gone are the streets, and the elegant tilted rectangle of Central Park is deformed into a squat square. The New York Review of Books uncovered one rider's complaint from the 1970s that Vignelli's map "stylised and distorted in a misguided attempt at simplification to the point where one can get only a very general idea of what goes where". The two approaches were the subject of a literal debate at The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art in 1978. A psychologist in the audience described a study she'd undertaken on both maps: neither fared well. Another attendee said that the best guide to the subway was simply "somebody on a platform". Some of us make maps but we all carry them around in our heads.

Above ground, as technology improves the resolution of maps, these assumed truths in our pockets, it can also fragment them. Digital maps are subject to whims and interests of their corporate providers. Sitting in New York, I may be served one version of the world; sitting in London, or wherever, you could be served quite another. They are also subject to the fragmented whims and interests of those with political clout.

"Maps are powerful things in times of crisis," Cheshire said.

Donald Trump meets with world leaders in the Oval Office in front of a map of Ukraine

DANIEL TOROK/WHITE HOUSE/ZUMA PRESS WIRE/REUTERS

In the US, Donald Trump has shown no particular reverence for maps as they are. In his first term, he presented in the Oval Office a map of Hurricane Dorian, with a bulbous growth drawn, apparently with a Sharpie, on to the National Weather Service's forecast track. Early in his second term, he signed Executive Order 14172, ostensibly renaming Denali to Mount McKinley (reversing an earlier Barack Obama decision that restored the Alaska Native name) and the Gulf of Mexico to the Gulf of America – "in recognition of this flourishing economic resource". This international newspaper does not reflect the change, nor does the Associated Press, which led to its being barred from White House events and a lawsuit. But my Google Maps does: "Gulf of America" in neat sans-serif surrounded by an oval of blue.

Cheshire recalled a long history of strategic and rhetorical cartography, and the renaming of territories that were the objects of desire. This history included Karl Haushofer, an ideological influence on Nazism, who had argued that maps can be aspirations as well as facts in a 1922 article titled "Die suggestive Karte". "That's kind of the game we're in, cartographically," Cheshire said. "I think [Trump] gets that. This guy is sort of viewing it as real-estate planning."

'THIS GUY IS SORT OF VIEWING MAPS AS REAL-ESTATE PLANNING'

Nor does Trump seem to care much for borders as they are drawn. He has said he wants Canada as the 51st US state and has referred to the prime minister as "governor". And Trump maintains his odd fixation on Greenland, ostensibly for national-security purposes and fuelled perhaps by the distortions of map projection. On social media, Trump has posted maps showing Canada, Greenland, Venezuela and Cuba superimposed with the US flag.

The disregard may be contagious. American political parties have recently exhibited no commitment to maps' permanence. Ahead of this year's midterm elections in November, congressional district maps have been edited in California, Missouri, North Carolina, Ohio, Texas and Utah, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures, and another large handful of states may yet change theirs, all part of a tit-for-tat electoral arms race to "redraw" district maps to favour the party of the redrawers. This is a rate of mid-decade gerrymandering not seen since the 1800s. (More typical is to redraw maps after the decadal census.) A generation ago, the Supreme Court was sceptical of this practice; now it blesses it. Justice Elena Kagan, in one dissenting opinion, recalls "those innocent days – prior to Texas's redistricting – when partisan gerrymanders seemed undemocratic or at least unsavory, rather than a mark of political conviction or loyalty".

Texas fired the first shot last summer, encouraged by a letter from the Department of Justice and then vocal support from Trump. Texas congresspeople currently tilt 25-13 Republican; the state's new map could net them another five seats. At one point, Democrats of the Texas legislature left the state in an effort to block its passage; a Republican senator announced that the FBI would help locate them. Two weeks later they returned and it passed. Last November, Californians retaliated by approving the Election Rigging Response Act and a new map along with it that may net Democrats a handful of seats there next year. Republicans themselves then complained to the Supreme Court. Last week, the court said this new map was also fine.

In other American states, often in isolated country, very old maps that never changed have recently been relitigated. Across a vast swath of the American west there runs a thick ribbon of chequerboard land, with squares a mile wide. Half the squares are public and half are private, the result of a railroad-building act signed by Abraham Lincoln. The problem is the corners. At the corners public land connects to public land diagonally, across single points – infinitesimal on both the map and the world. More than eight million acres of public American land are locked up this way. A few years ago, a group of hunters, armed with a map, traversed these corners in Wyoming. They were sued by the wealthy owner of the adjacent land. The owner lost in lower courts. In October, the Supreme Court declined to hear the case, essentially handing victory to the public-land hunters. That land, marked free on the map, remains free.

IN THIS ISSUE OF THE MAGAZINE, FT GRAPHICAL AND data journalists take a moment to appreciate and examine the ways maps are remade. Jana Tauschinski presents a gallery of maps that illustrate a changing planet and the changing technology we've built to measure it (page 22). She shows how alpine borders – those of Italy and Switzerland – shift slowly but daily with the glaciers and watersheds that define them. And she illustrates how advances in remote sensing are revealing even the remotest and most war-torn lands in ever denser pixels to anyone with a screen, and how the maps that will determine the future of a country are remade with the stroke of a pen. Meanwhile, Alan Smith unearths a cartographic competition administered in 1914 by the Financial Times (page 28), in which readers were tasked with filling a blank map with the borders as they foresaw them after the first world war. It was a practice that had already become a grim hobby elsewhere in Europe, as it would be today. As Alan's deeply human story illustrates, no mapmaker is separate from the real world they depict. FT

Oliver Roeder is the FT's US senior data journalist

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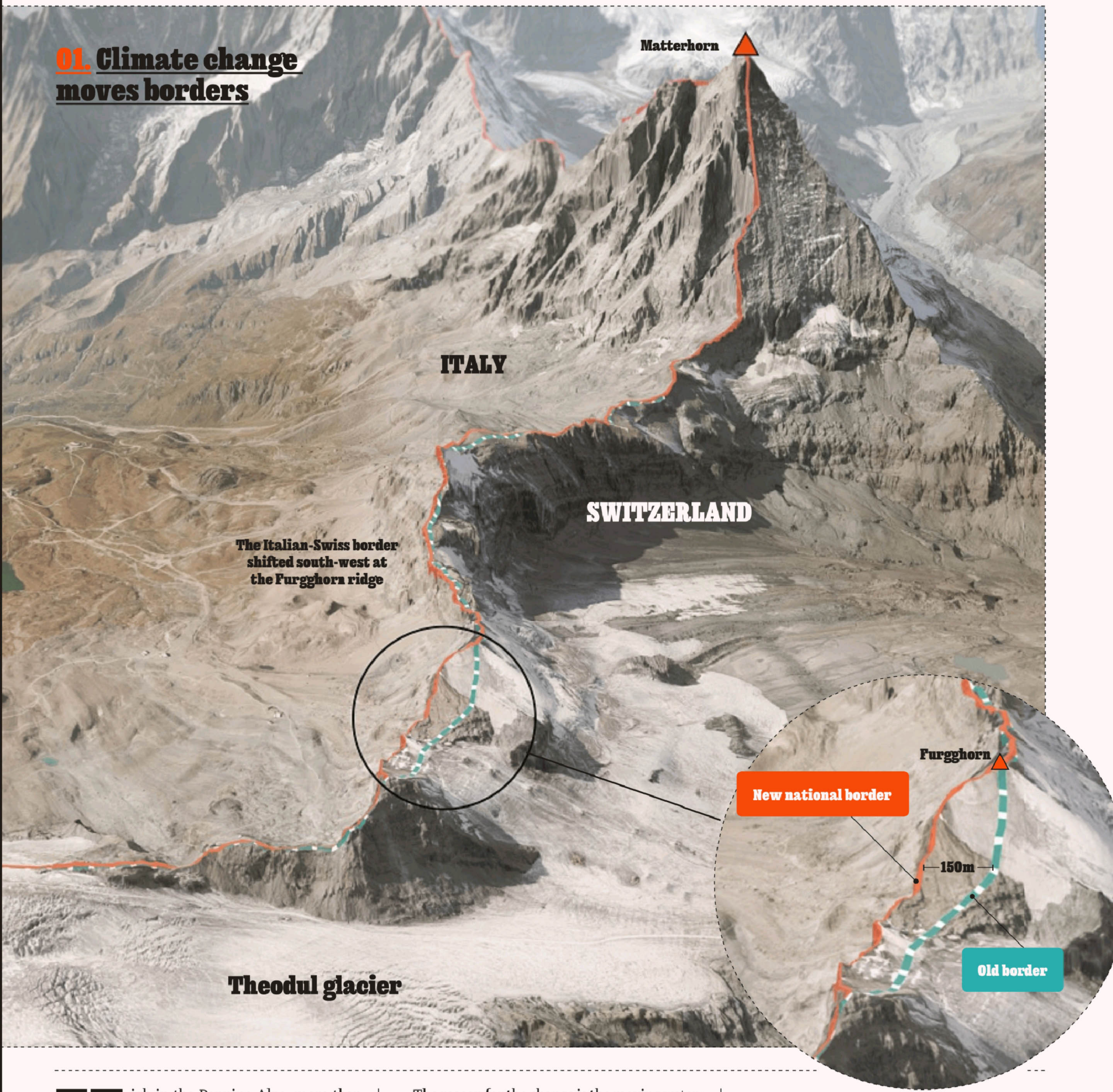
Five maps to change the way you see the world

Maps and words by Jana Tauschinski

01. Climate change moves borders


Matterhorn
ITALY
SWITZERLAND
The Italian-Swiss border shifted south-west at the Furgghorn ridge
Theodul glacier
Furgghorn
New national border
150m
Old border

High in the Pennine Alps, more than 3,000m above sea level, climate change has been quietly redrawing the Swiss-Italian border. Below the jagged peak of the Matterhorn, a strip of land on the Furgghorn saddle that was once located in Italy is now in Switzerland. A ski lift perched on the top of this ridge has swapped countries.

The reason for the change is the moving watershed, along which parts of the national border are defined. As the warming climate causes glaciers to melt, local watersheds may shift - and with them the border. In the case of the Furgghorn saddle, water that previously flowed south-west towards Italy now streams north-east to Switzerland.

Melting glaciers aren't the only natural force capable of shifting borders; landslides or the remeandering of a river can do so too. About two-thirds of Switzerland's 1,935km border is defined by natural features such as lakes, rivers or watersheds, according to the Swiss national office for topography. As these features change over time, so again may the national border.

Source: Swisstopo, Tinitaly

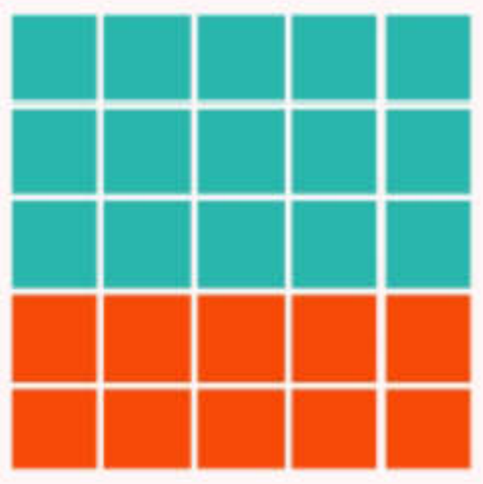
02. The battle to redraw America

At present, 25 of the 38 Texas seats in the US House of Representatives are held by Republicans. Last year, encouraged by the Trump administration, the Republican-controlled Texas state legislature redrew its district map with the goal of increasing that number to 30. A coalition of voters and organisations sued to block the map, arguing that it was racially discriminatory and, in particular, would "dilute the voting strength of Latinos". The Supreme Court allowed it, and seems to have adopted a newly friendly stance toward partisan gerrymandering.

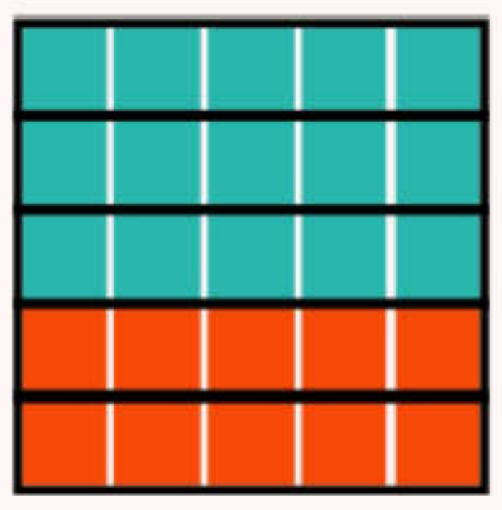
Texas sparked a cartographic arms race and California retaliated in kind. In November, that state's majority Democratic voters approved the so-called Election Rigging Response Act. The resulting new map could secure a handful of net seats for congressional Democrats. In January, the California Republican party appealed to the Supreme Court; the state argued that Republicans "are asking the court to treat California's map differently from how it treated Texas's map". The court approved the new map this month.

In total, six states have already implemented new maps ahead of the midterm elections and nine others are somewhere in the process of doing so, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures. That's a rate of redrawing not seen since the 19th century.

WHY DISTRICTS ARE BEING REDRAWN

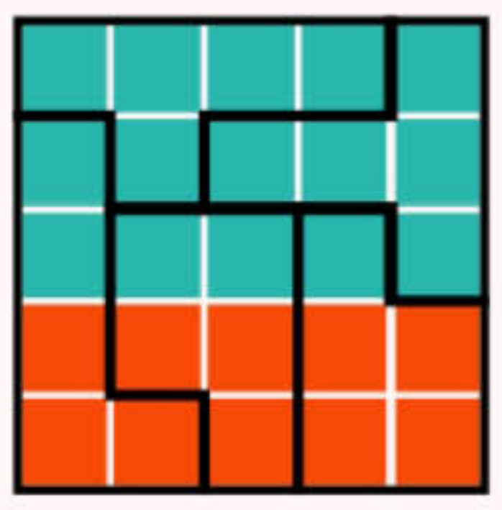


Take these 25 voters. 60% vote teal and 40% vote orange. Districts can be drawn differently to produce different outcomes.



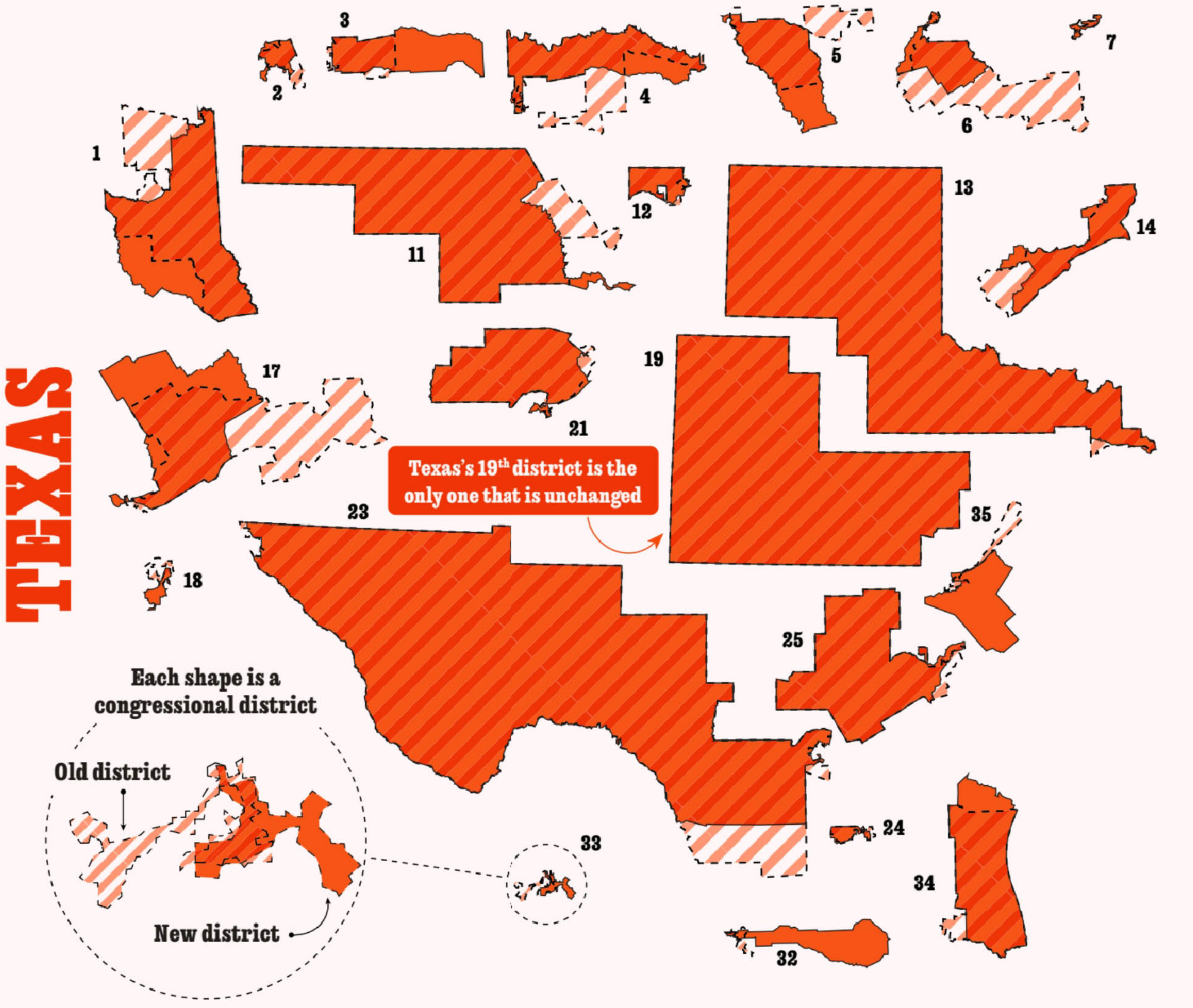
REPRESENTATIVE

3 teal, 2 orange districts: teal wins.



DISPROPORTIONAL

2 teal, 3 orange districts: orange wins.

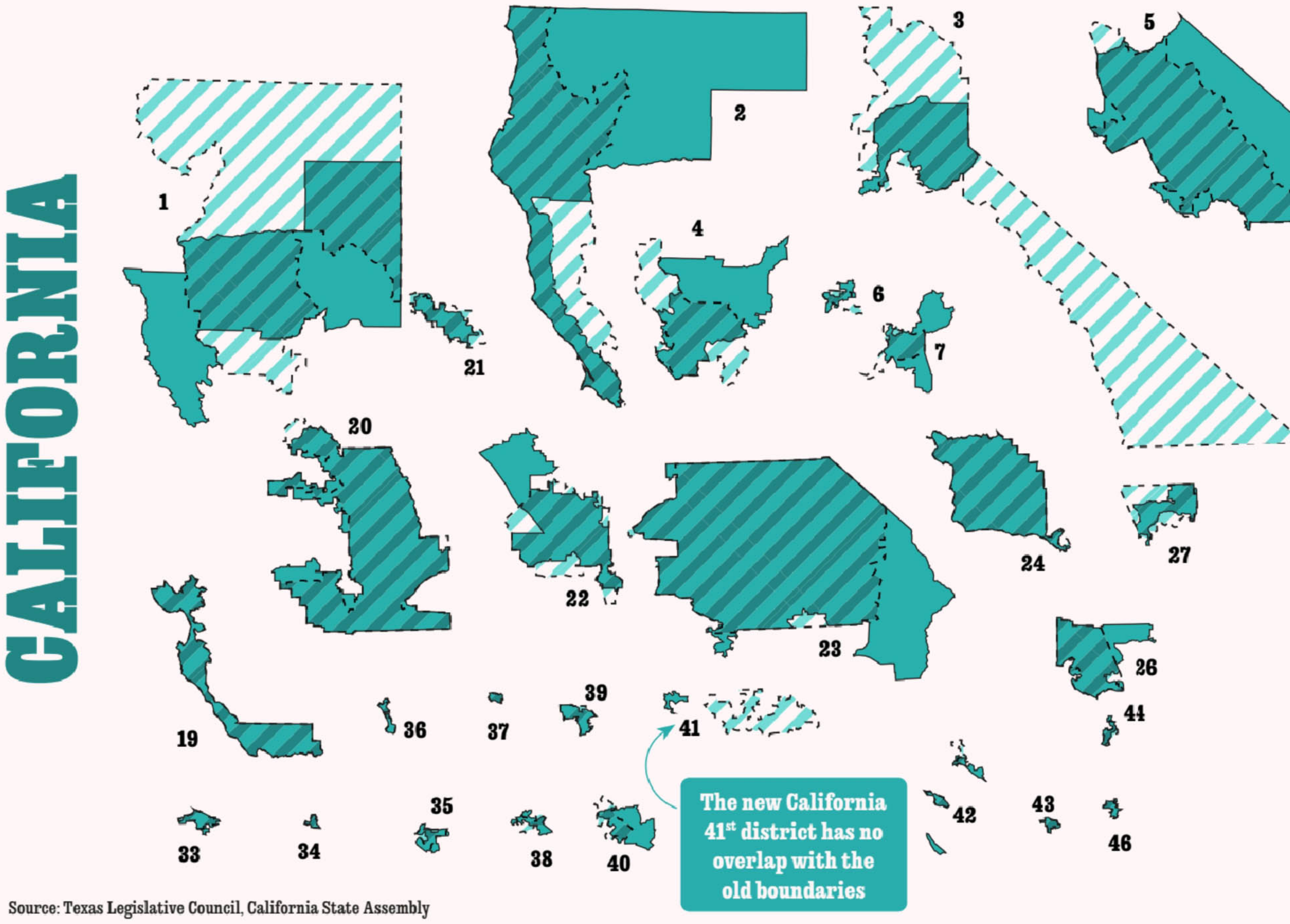


Texas's 19th district is the only one that is unchanged

Each shape is a congressional district

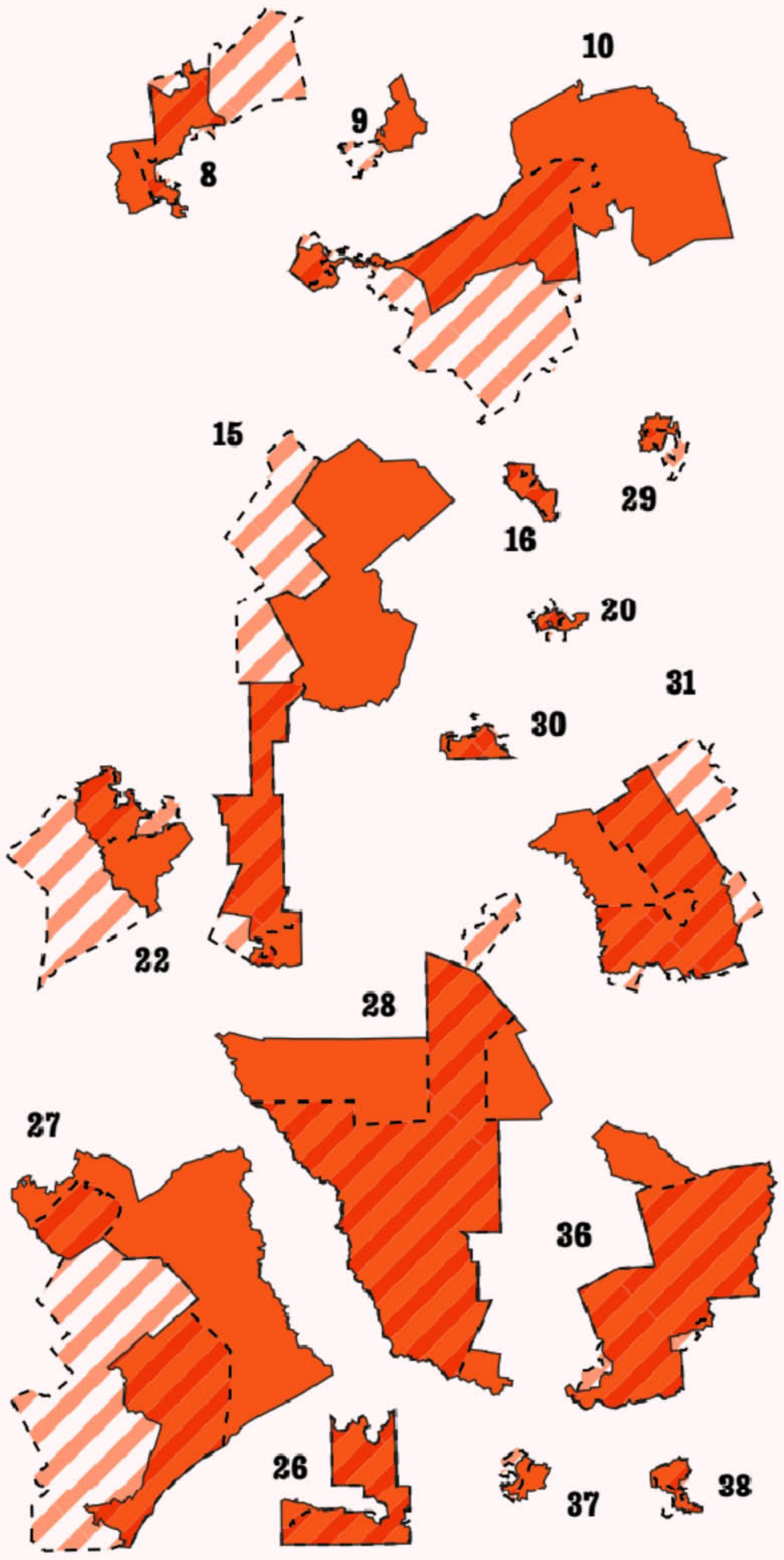
Old district

New district



The new California 41st district has no overlap with the old boundaries

Source: Texas Legislative Council, California State Assembly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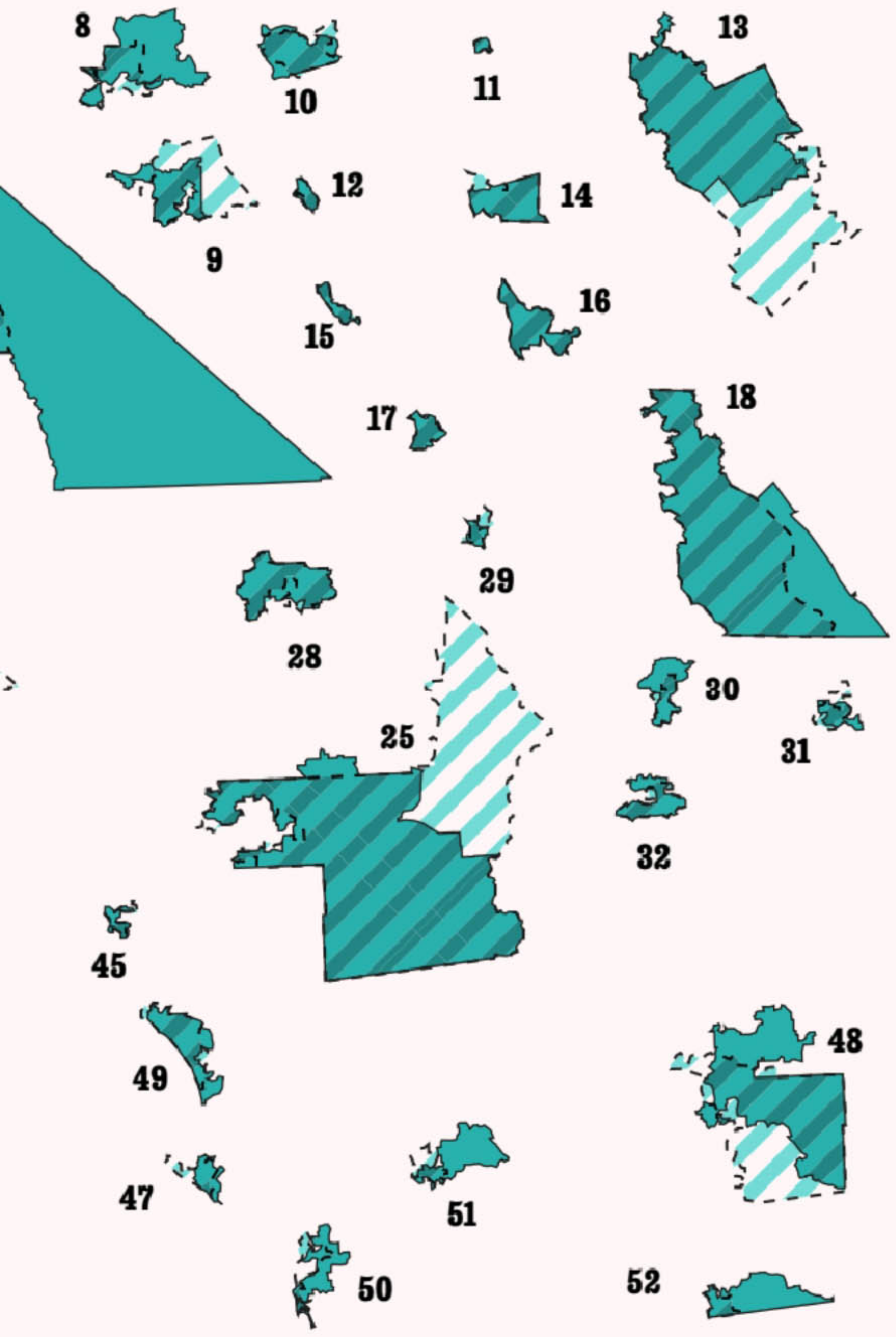
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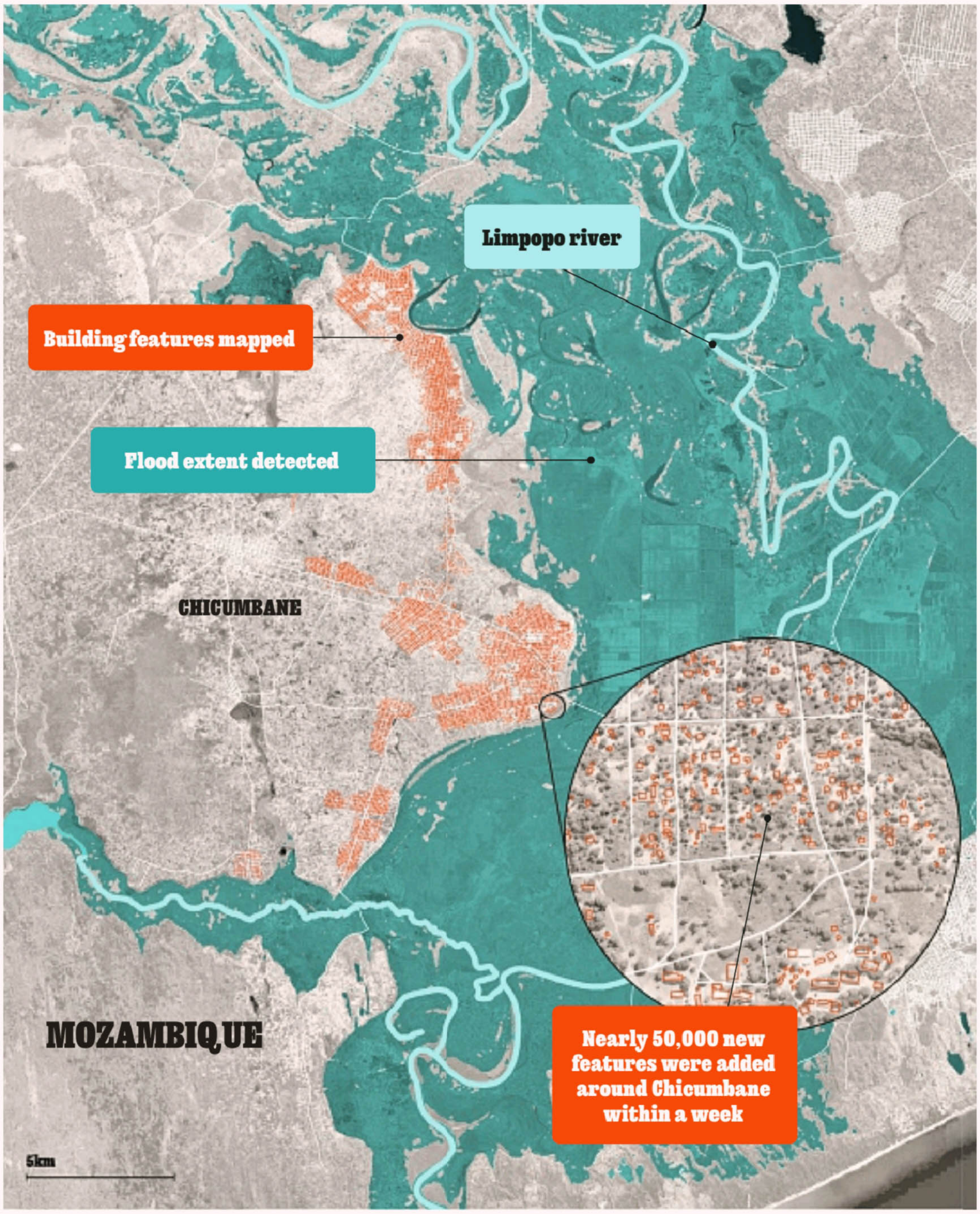
03. Remote mappers and the drowned province


Limpopo river
Building features mapped
Flood extent detected
CHICUMBANE
MOZAMBIQUE
5km

Nearly 50,000 new features were added around Chicumbane within a week

In late January, Mozambique in eastern Africa was devastated by flooding after heavy rains battered the country, causing rivers to burst their banks. The floods affected more than 720,000 people, according to the World Health Organization.

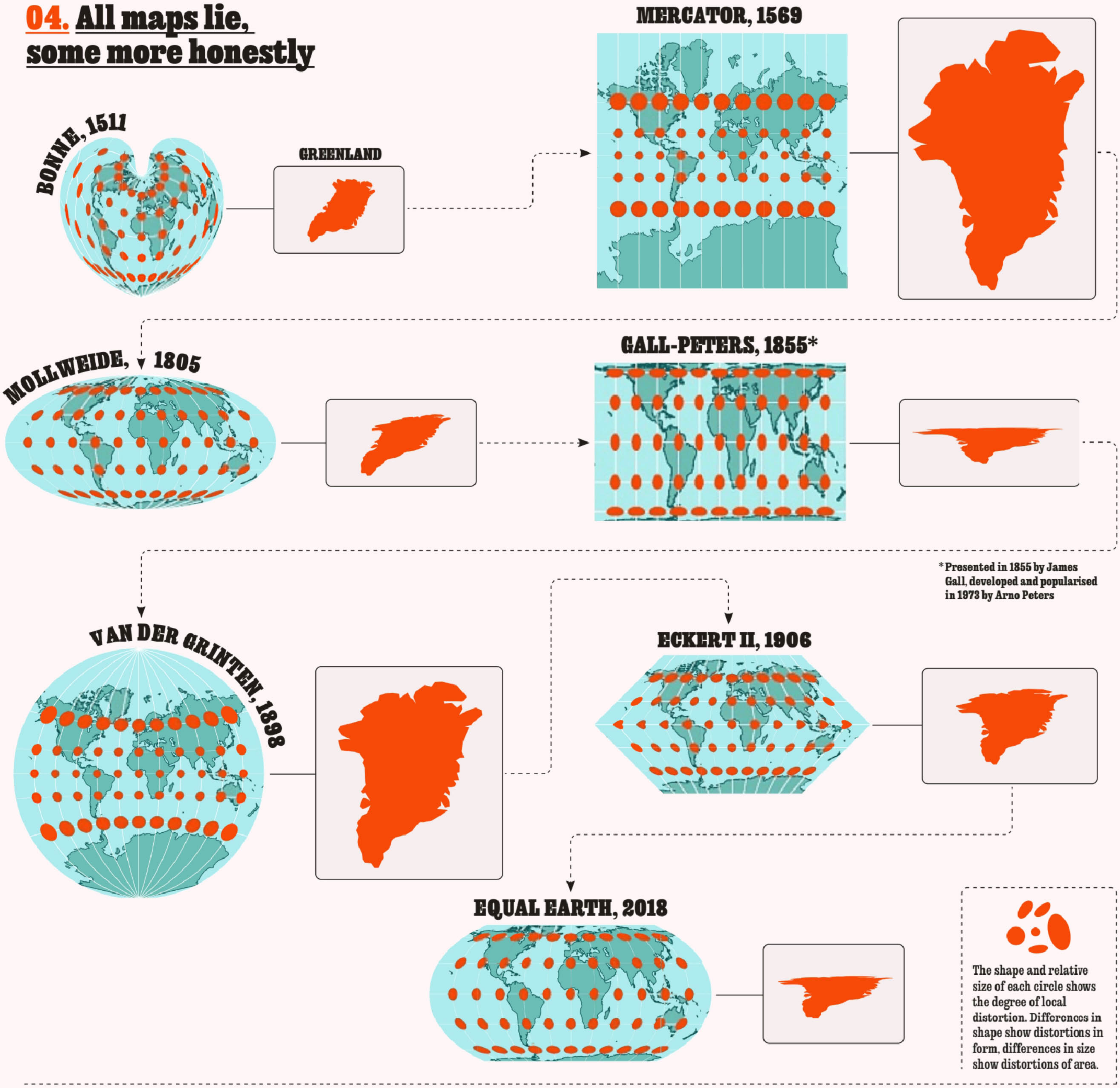
As rescue operations began on the ground, volunteer mapmakers of the Humanitarian OpenStreetMap Team got to work too. Carefully tracing key geographic features from satellite imagery, within days the remote cartographers mapped about 50,000 buildings around the town of Chicumbane in the affected Gaza Province.

"Cities tend to be fairly well mapped everywhere," said Mikel Maron, longtime board member of the OSM Foundation, but smaller settlements in rural areas of lower-income countries may be surprisingly unmapped. Detailed and up-to-date vector maps can be critical for first responders and where that data is missing, it is often volunteers who are manually filling it in.

MOZAMBIQUE

Shown building features were mapped between Jan 23-28 2026; shown flood extent detected Jan 23-24 2026. Source: OpenStreetMap, Unosat

04. All maps lie, some more honestly



*Presented in 1855 by James Gall, developed and popularised in 1973 by Arno Peters

The shape and relative size of each circle shows the degree of local distortion. Differences in shape show distortions in form, differences in size show distortions of area.

How does one accurately depict a three-dimensional object on a two-dimensional plane? It's a challenge astronomers, mathematicians and geographers have been grappling with for centuries. Many solutions have been presented, yet none offers the perfect answer.

Designed in 1569 for navigators, Gerardus Mercator's map is still used by many web mapping services today. It preserves local shapes and angles, but hugely distorts relative area at the global scale, exaggerating the size of countries in higher latitudes. To address some of these flaws, more than two centuries later the German mathematician and astronomer Karl Mollweide drew an elliptical projection. His solution is area-preserving, but shapes are more distorted.

More recently, the 2018 Equal Earth projection, created by Bojan Šavrič of the mapping software company Esri, Tom Patterson at the US National Park Service and Bernhard Jenny of Monash University, was an attempt to show countries close to the equator at their true size, while preserving form throughout. But it remains a compromise. So, is there a way to map the degree of compromise itself?

The 19th-century French mathematician Nicolas Tissot set out to visually compare map distortions. As shown in the diagram, circles are projected at regular intervals across the globe, showing the level of local distortion. Only when ellipses are perfect circles and of equal size across a projection is there no local distortion. Owing to its distance from the equator, Greenland illustrates these distortions particularly well.

Source: FT research

05. When satellites learnt to see

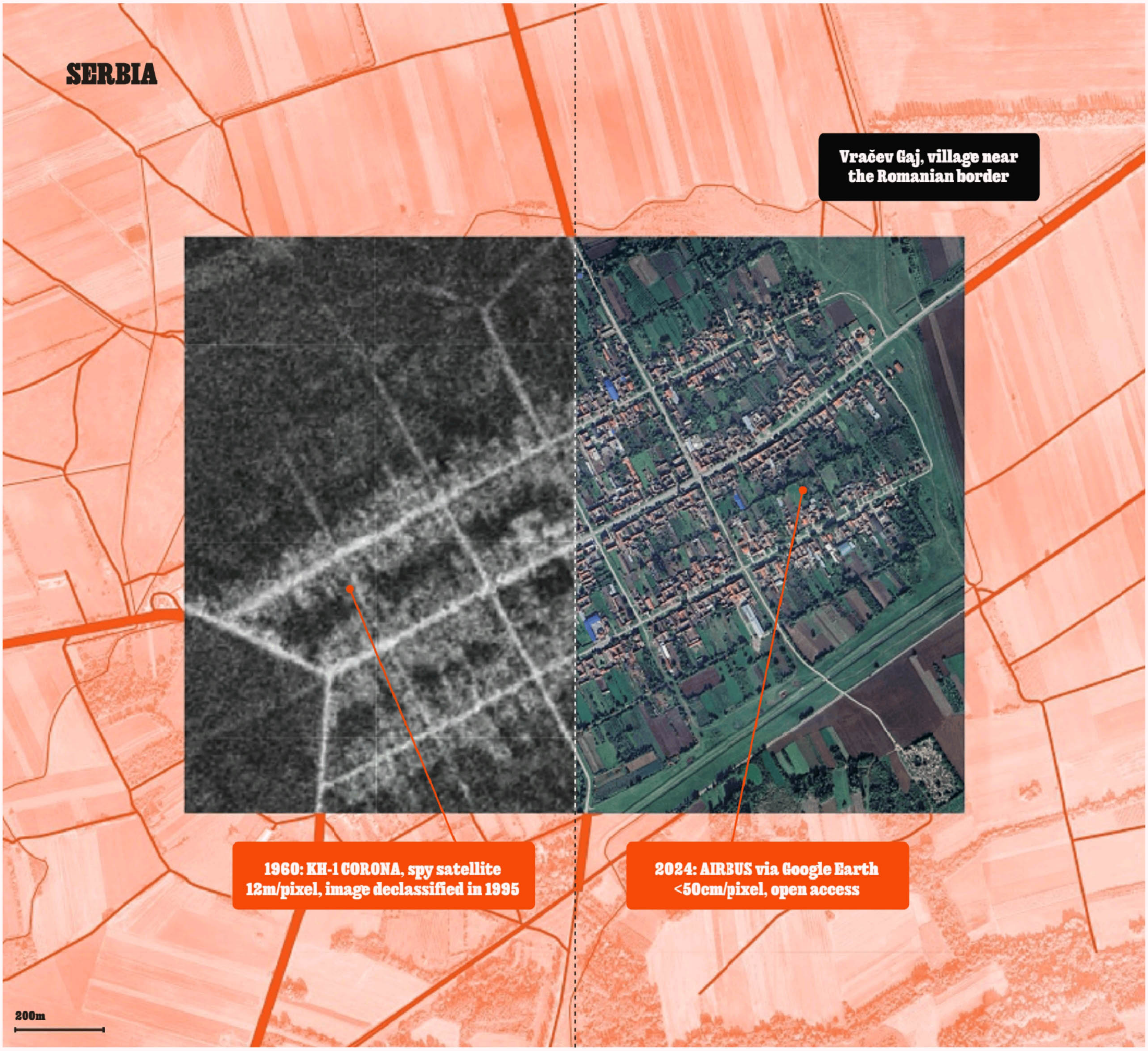
Source:
USGS via SpaceFromSpace, Google Earth

In 1960, the US launched the first successful Corona satellite mission, as part of its groundbreaking space-based observation system. The exposed film was loaded into recovery capsules and parachuted back down to Earth for processing. After early technical mishaps, these classified images were used to create maps for intelligence agencies. By 1972, more than 860,000 images of the Earth's surface had been captured, but only in 1995 were these declassified. This image of a small village in Serbia is from the first mission in 1960, KH-1.

Earth observation has developed rapidly with the launch of public scientific programmes such as Landsat and later Sentinel. New spectral bands were added, allowing the detection of water or heat signatures, while improving spatial and temporal resolution.

With the release of Google Earth, suddenly anyone could access relatively recent imagery from most places. Today, many commercial fleets offer near-real-time imagery at very high resolution, to the point that you can see not just buildings or vehicles, but in some cases humans. Captured by satellites whizzing around the Earth hundreds of kilometres away and at speeds of 28,000km per hour (or 7.8km per second), such imagery has also become a key tool for journalists. FT

Jana Tauschinski is the FT's graphics editor



Vračev Gaj, village near the Romanian border

1960: KH-1 CORONA, spy satellite
12m/pixel, image declassified in 1995

2024: AIRBUS via Google Earth
<50cm/pixel, open access

British Statute Miles 69·16 = 1 Degree
Kilometres 111·3 = 1 Degree
A T L A N T I C O C E A N
ICELAND
Arctic Circle
Lofoten Islands
Faeroe Is.
Shetland Is.
BRITISH ISLES
SCOTLAND
IRELAND
Irish Sea
WALES
ENGLAND
NORTH SEA
DENMARK
BALTIC SEA
Gulf of Bothnia
ESTHONIA
Gulf of Riga
LITHUANIA
GERMANY
POLAND
English Channel
BAY OF BISCAY
FRANCE
CZECHO SLOVAKIA
AUSTRIA
HUNGARY
SPAIN
PORTUGAL
YUGO-SLAVIA
BULGARIA
GREECE
ADRIATIC SEA
TYRRHENIAN SEA
IONIAN SEA
Sicily
Malta
MEDITERRANEAN
MOROCCO
ALGERIA
TUNIS
Gulf of Gabes
High Atlas
Anti Atlas
Sahara Atlas
Tripoli

The FT contest that challenged readers to reimagine the shape of a postwar Europe

CHANGING THE MAP OF EUROPE
The Financial Times
COMPETITION MAP
NORWAY
SWEDEN
FRANCE
AUSTRIA
GERMANY

By Alan Smith

The challenge was as concise as it was complex: "Sketch in the boundaries of states according to your view of probable peace terms." Two months into what was quickly becoming known as the Great War, the Financial Times asked its readers to predict the impact the conflict would have on the map of Europe. As a game. With cash prizes.

Britain had declared war on Germany on August 4, following the invasion of neutral Belgium. Over the next two months, before the arrival of trench warfare on the Western Front, a series of six major battles, known as the "Battle of the Frontiers", sent casualty figures soaring to horrific levels.

France suffered up to 260,000 casualties, including 27,000 deaths on a single day in August. Germany's losses in August and September were estimated at more than 50,000 killed and 80,000 missing. British casualties in the same period were an estimated 29,000.

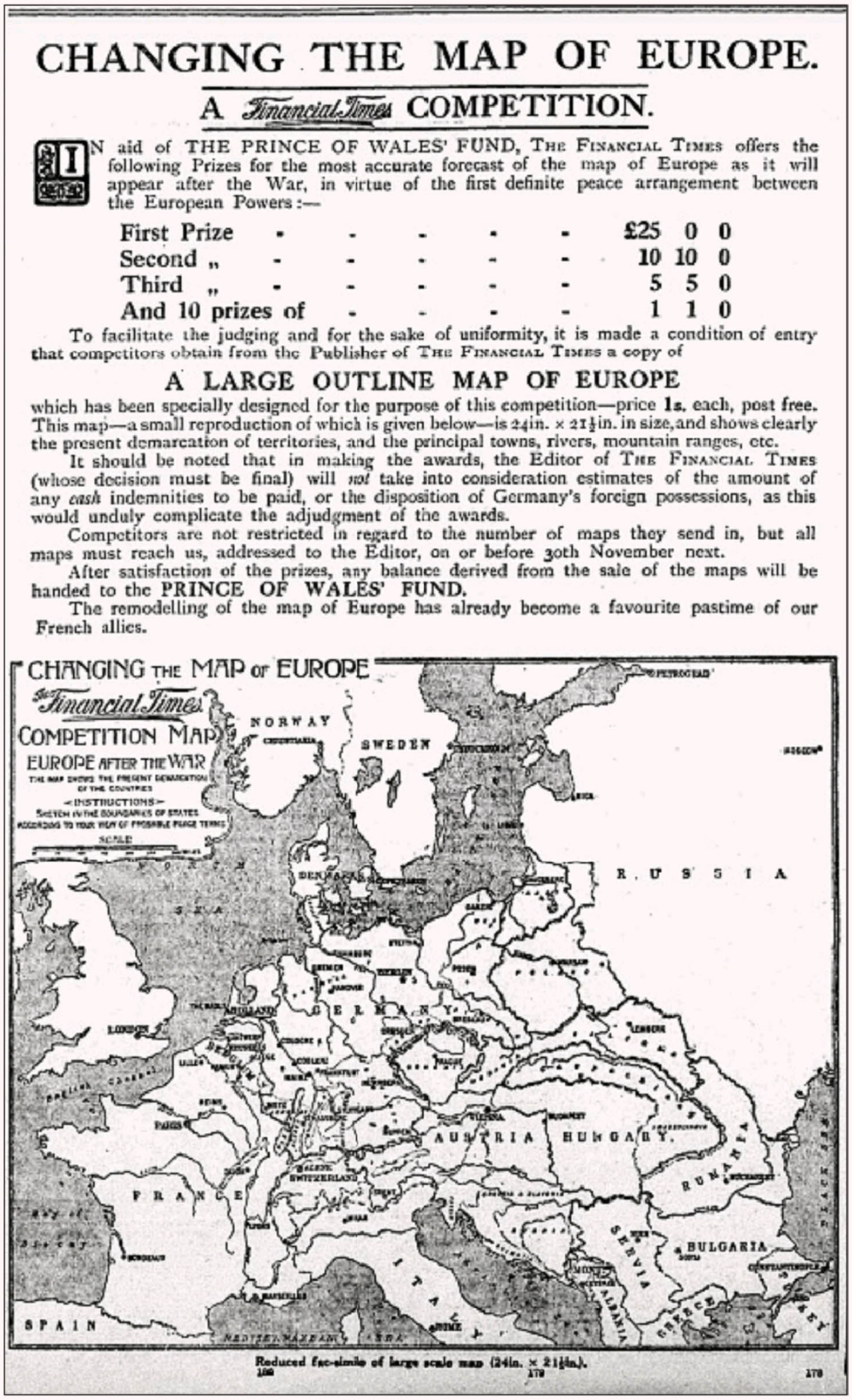
So what made the FT's editors feel that the autumn of 1914 was the perfect time for a competition? A clue lies in the last line of the announcement: "The remodelling of the map of Europe has already become a favourite pastime of our French allies."

In France, map-based forecasting of future borders began almost as soon as the war started, fuelled by the traumatic loss of Alsace-Lorraine to Germany in 1870-71. There was also a strong belief that the war was existential and would end with a major redrawing of European boundaries, in France's favour. Hypothetical maps of Europe after Germany's inevitable defeat appeared in newspapers and journals, even in school atlases. This was not a fringe activity.

In Britain, war aims, at least at the outset, were different. The country was fighting as a result of treaty obligations, not in order to remap Europe's borders. As such, public speculation was initially more muted.

But the FT competition essentially reflected a growing appetite for the reimagining of future European borders. The prizes were handsome: the first prize of £25 would be worth more than £3,700 today. To enter, readers had to send off for a 24in x 21.5in base map (a shilling each, excluding postage), rather than use the small facsimile printed in the newspaper.

The map was sparsely furnished with principal cities, rivers and country borders as they were in July 1914. Duly annotated, readers' cartographic forecasts had to be in the hands of the FT's editors, then in Coleman Street, by November 30 for consideration. Adverts in the paper heavily promoted the competition ahead of its closing date.



CHANGING THE MAP OF EUROPE.

A *Financial Times* COMPETITION.

IN aid of THE PRINCE OF WALES' FUND, THE FINANCIAL TIMES offers the following Prizes for the most accurate forecast of the map of Europe as it will appear after the War, in virtue of the first definite peace arrangement between the European Powers:—

First Prize	£25	0	0
Second „	10	10	0
Third „	5	5	0
And 10 prizes of	1	1	0

To facilitate the judging and for the sake of uniformity, it is made a condition of entry that competitors obtain from the Publisher of THE FINANCIAL TIMES a copy of

A LARGE OUTLINE MAP OF EUROPE

which has been specially designed for the purpose of this competition—price **1s.** each, post free. This map—a small reproduction of which is given below—is 24in. × 21½in. in size, and shows clearly the present demarcation of territories, and the principal towns, rivers, mountain ranges, etc.

It should be noted that in making the awards, the Editor of THE FINANCIAL TIMES (whose decision must be final) will *not* take into consideration estimates of the amount of any *cash* indemnities to be paid, or the disposition of Germany's foreign possessions, as this would unduly complicate the adjudgment of the awards.

Competitors are not restricted in regard to the number of maps they send in, but all maps must reach us, addressed to the Editor, on or before 30th November next.

After satisfaction of the prizes, any balance derived from the sale of the maps will be handed to the **PRINCE OF WALES' FUND.**

The remodelling of the map of Europe has already become a favourite pastime of our French allies.

Reduced fac-simile of large scale map (24in. × 21½in.).

SOURCE: FT RESEARCH. MAP BOUNDARIES SHOWN ARE GENERALISED AND FOR ILLUSTRATIVE PURPOSES ONLY

JOHANN LUBBO FOREST SPARENBORG WAS BORN IN Norden, Lower Saxony, in 1849. By the 1870s, he had relocated to Calcutta, where he married Annie, who was a British subject. Over the next decade, Johann established himself as a merchant specialising in the chemical trade between India and Britain.

While in Calcutta, a son (Hans), daughter (Dora) and another son (Johann Adolph) arrived. The family relocated to London in the 1880s. In 1895, Johann's business, J Sparenborg & Co, was registered at 18 Leadenhall Street, about a 15-minute walk from the FT's offices in Coleman Street. A large house in the leafy south London suburbs, with three domestic servants, suggests life was good for the Sparenborgs. The birth of another daughter, Winifred, in 1898, completed their quartet of children.

The eldest boy Hans had enrolled at Dulwich College in 1887, where he spent seven distinguished years, the last two playing for the 1st XV rugby team as a three-quarter. He then went up to Gonville & Caius College, Cambridge, where, although he did not graduate, a recommendation from the vice-chancellor resulted in a commission in the Royal Lancaster Regiment in 1900.

Hans married Flora Vigers, an architect's daughter, in Marylebone in 1903, with his brother acting as a witness. A son, Colin, followed the next year.

In 1906, two years after being widowed, Johann Lubbo became a naturalised British citizen. This was a prescient move. In August 1914, the Aliens Restriction Act was passed by parliament, requiring foreign nationals to register with the police. The act mainly targeted German nationals living in Britain, meaning they could be detained or deported.

Hans is recorded in the 1911 Census as a British subject by parentage - of course, only British subjects could hold a commission in the British Army. The same census records that brother Johann Adolph now called himself John.

Hans had been promoted to lieutenant in 1902, ahead of a two-year deployment to the West African Frontier Force in what is now northern Nigeria. He was promoted to captain in 1910, and, when war broke out, was transferred to the 1st Battalion which would form part of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) sent to the continent in August 1914.

The BEF was made up of about 80,000 army regulars, most of them veterans like Hans. Although small compared with the continental armies, they were also considered among the most experienced and best trained, eventually adopting the nickname of "The Old Contemptibles" after (apocryphal) orders from Kaiser Wilhelm II for the German First Army to "walk over General [John] French's contemptible little Army".

The Battle of the Frontiers took place on a series of battlefields across France's eastern border and southern Belgium. It was at the Battle of Mons on August 23 that Hans and his 1st Battalion colleagues, as part of II Corps, found themselves confronting the enemy for the first time. It was the BEF's first real engagement of the war and the first major British battle on the continent since the Crimean war.

The battle was furious, with heavy casualties on both sides. The British were heavily outnumbered by the Germans, estimated at about 3-to-1, but made deadly use of the Lee-Enfield rifle which they were trained to fire 15 times every minute. But eventually, due to the numerical superiority of the Germans and the withdrawal of the French Fifth Army following its defeat at Charleroi, the British were forced to pull back.

The "Great Retreat" saw II Corps fighting a series of rearguard actions including at Le Cateau and Néry, as the British and their French allies were pushed back by German forces.

The retreat ended at the First Battle of the Marne, the Germans having come within 40km of Paris. The First Battle of the Aisne was an attempted Allied counter-attack, which resulted in the "Race to the Sea", as the competing armies attempted to outflank each other to the north. In doing so, they inadvertently created the Western Front and the war moved on to the horrors of trench warfare.

With such fast-moving events, updates from the front lines were sometimes slow to reach home. But, in September 1914, the Sparenborg family received news they must have been dreading. Hans was reported wounded. The next month, an update added that he was missing, with unofficial reports suggesting he was a prisoner of war.

IN NOVEMBER 1914, WITH SOLDIERS ON BOTH SIDES continuing to die in great numbers, the FT published an update on its "successful competition", including descriptions of some of the "very considerable number" of maps it had received before entries closed. "Hatred of Prussian militarism and deep sympathy with wronged Belgium" had affected the forecasts of its map-drawers, resulting in the "severe contraction of the former's frontiers and a generous expansion of the latter's".

One submission, displayed in the paper under the heading "Freak maps", proposed that Belgium would receive a "monstrous cantle" of Germany, including Frankfurt, Koblenz, Mainz and Cologne. Another was "enough to make Frederick the Great revolve in his grave". That entry placed Hanover at the heart of an independent state covering all of Germany "from the Elbe to Munich and the Tyrol", with Prussia "reduced to utter insignificance under the title 'The Republic of Berlin'... relegated to a small stretch of territory from Hamburg and Danzig in the north to a point west of Breslau in the south, Posen being handed over to the new State of Poland".

LEFT: an ad announcing the FT's competition to predict the borders of postwar Europe. ABOVE: Captain Hans Sparenborg

Another section details maps from "the darker side". One entry, with no annotations at all, implied that "after the enormous upheaval of this terrible war we shall all be 'as we were' and might as well have left the horrible thing alone". Submissions from those suggesting favourable outcomes for Germany were dismissed as unpatriotic "croakers", who were "happily... a quite negligible minority".

There was "practical unanimity" among readers for a number of pro-Allied outcomes: the cession of Alsace-Lorraine to France; Galicia to Russia; Schleswig-Holstein to Denmark; Bosnia to Serbia and the Trentino to Italy.

But there were also many speculative futures proposed elsewhere on the continent. For Britain, Heligoland recovered, along with a "pied à terre" in Turkey. Constantinople to the Russians. Or to Bulgaria. The neutralisation of the Kiel Canal. The Dardanelles to be an international highway "like the Suez Canal". The separation of Austria-Hungary.

IN SEPTEMBER, THE SPARENBORGS RECEIVED NEWS HANS WAS WOUNDED

Despite the vast cartographic permutations, the update optimistically suggested that it was "quite within the bounds of possibility" that one of the entries had successfully foretold "the coming readjustment of European frontiers". Even if, with just a hint of colonial xenophobia, many of them were "from persons of foreign nationality, judging by their names".

The Financial Times of 1914 was different from the FT of today. As a specialist financial newspaper, it had a modest but influential circulation before the Great War, putting it significantly behind mainstream newspapers. It would eventually merge with its main rival of the day, the Financial News, in 1945, laying the foundation for the modern Financial Times we know today.

From the war's outset, summaries of front-line developments were provided on page three. Initially, casualty reports were included, often with genteel detail: "Captain C. S. A. Akerman, Royal Engineers, slight concussion and injury to arm caused by fall from horse, 21st August" (Aug 25 1914).

There was a consistently patriotic slant. Following the first day of the Battle of the Somme in July 1916, the FT reported that "the general situation may be regarded as favourable". In fact, there had been 57,470 British casualties, of whom 19,240 had been killed.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the majority of the FT's coverage concerned itself with how the war was affecting the world of finance. The paper revealed in 2017 that the FT had played a part in covering up the Bank of England's manipulation of its balance sheet (later praised as "masterful" by John Maynard Keynes), following a lack of public interest in the UK government's 1914 War Loan scheme. And in 1918, the FT published a separate income tax guide because a series of war budgets had lowered tax thresholds and brought more people into the taxation system. In other words, advice on how to cope with fiscal drag, before the term had been coined.

In April 1915, the Sparenborgs received confirmation of Hans's death. He died on August 26 1914 at Harcourt, near Le Cateau, as the 1st Battalion made its retreat from the Battle of Mons.

According to the FT, the battle on that day "was of the most severe and desperate character. The troops offered a superb and stubborn resistance to the tremendous odds with which they were confronted, and at length extricated themselves in good order, though with serious losses and under the heaviest artillery fire." According to a corporal in his battalion, Hans's death was caused by the "bursting of a shell".

Hans was one of Dulwich College's first two "Old Alleynians" to die in military service during the war, both of them on the same day at Le Cateau. He left behind his widow Flora and young son, whose own life would also be cut short. Colin died in 1920 at the Hospital for Sick Children in Great Ormond Street of endocarditis, an infection of the heart's inner lining, at the age of 16.

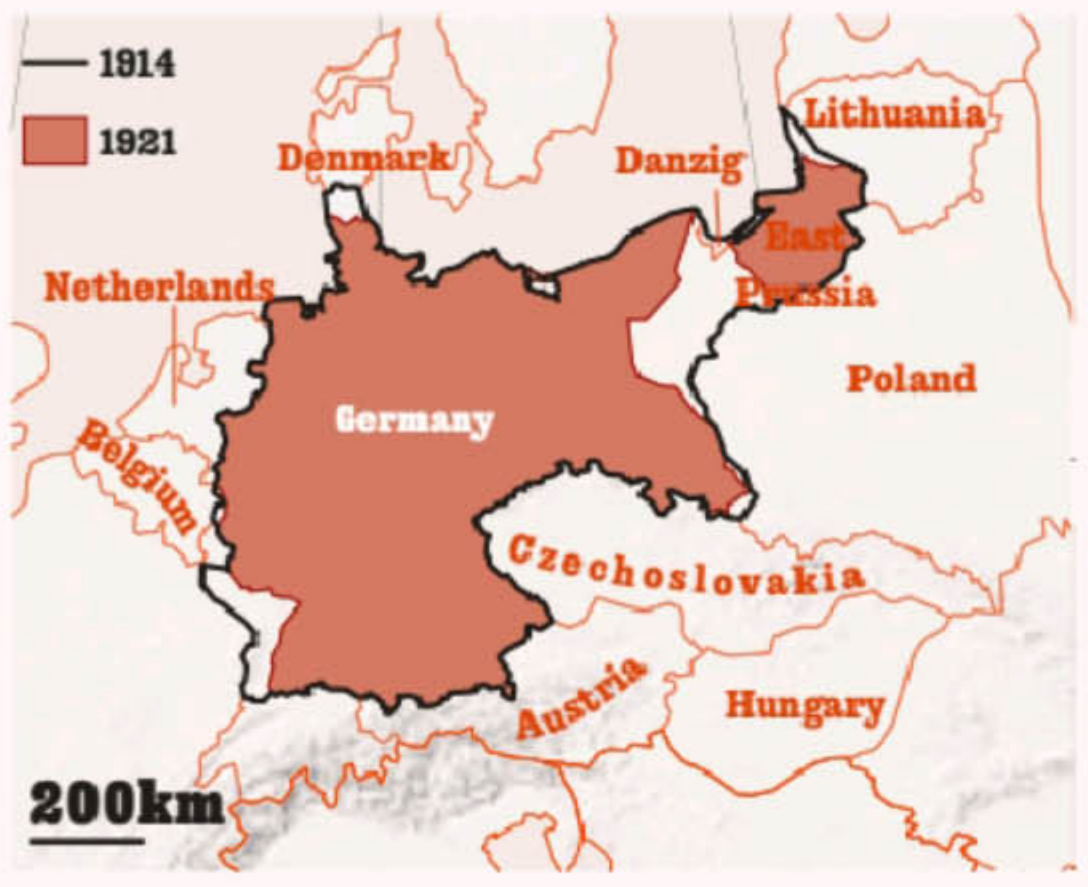
To the Sparenborgs, in April 1915, confirmation of Hans's death must have been devastating, coming as it did amid a rising home tide of anti-German sentiment. A month later, the sinking of the RMS Lusitania by a U-boat fuelled further public anger.

BETWEEN 1914 AND THE EVENTUAL ANNOUNCEMENT of the FT competition results in 1921, Europe moved from a continent dominated by multinational empires to one of nation-states. Borders were redrawn between 1918 and 1920 through the collapse of imperial authority and a series of five postwar peace treaties collectively known as the Paris Peace Conference.

Precisely seven years after the competition closed to entries, the FT published a new map of Europe along with an honest admission of how readers had fared with their competition entries: "No map sent in is even approximately accurate as compared with the final lines arranged by the Peace Conference."

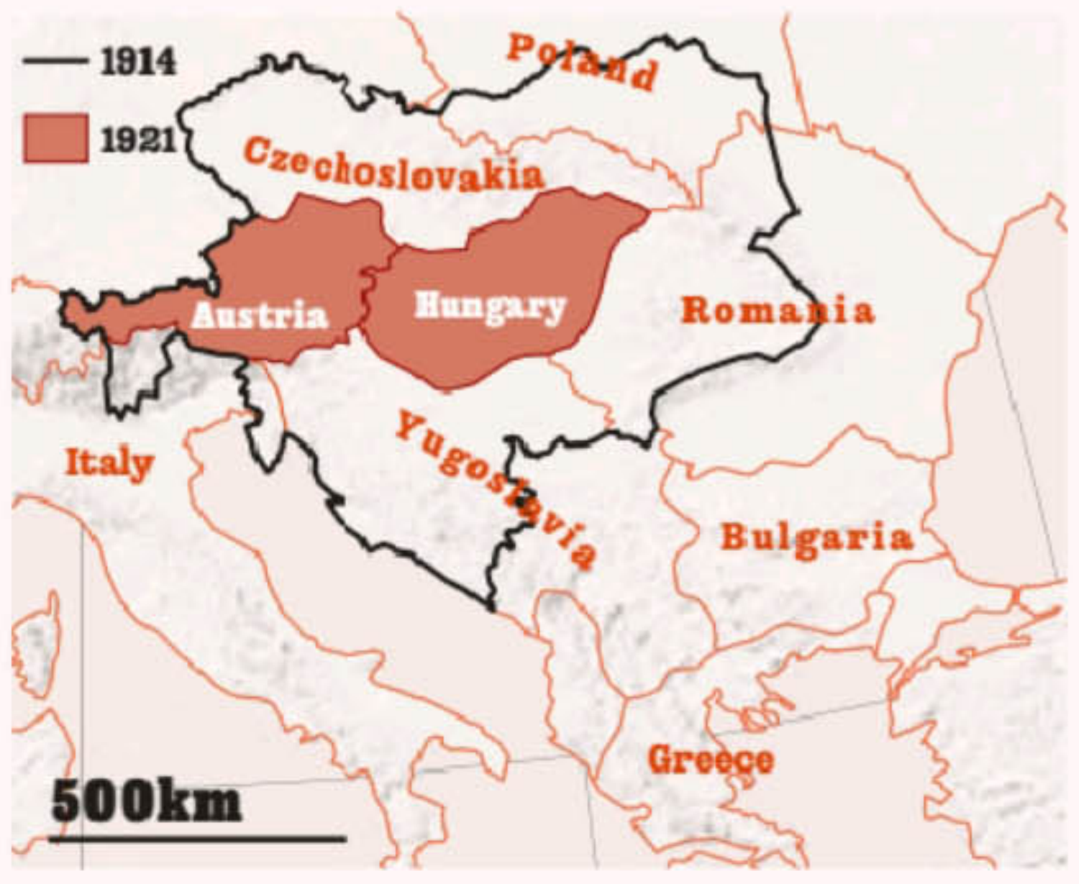
Where all readers erred was in making assumptions about Russian immutability. The revolution of 1917, which saw Russia dismantle its monarchy and leave the international war (to begin a civil one), was at most a distant prospect in 1914.

GERMAN EMPIRE



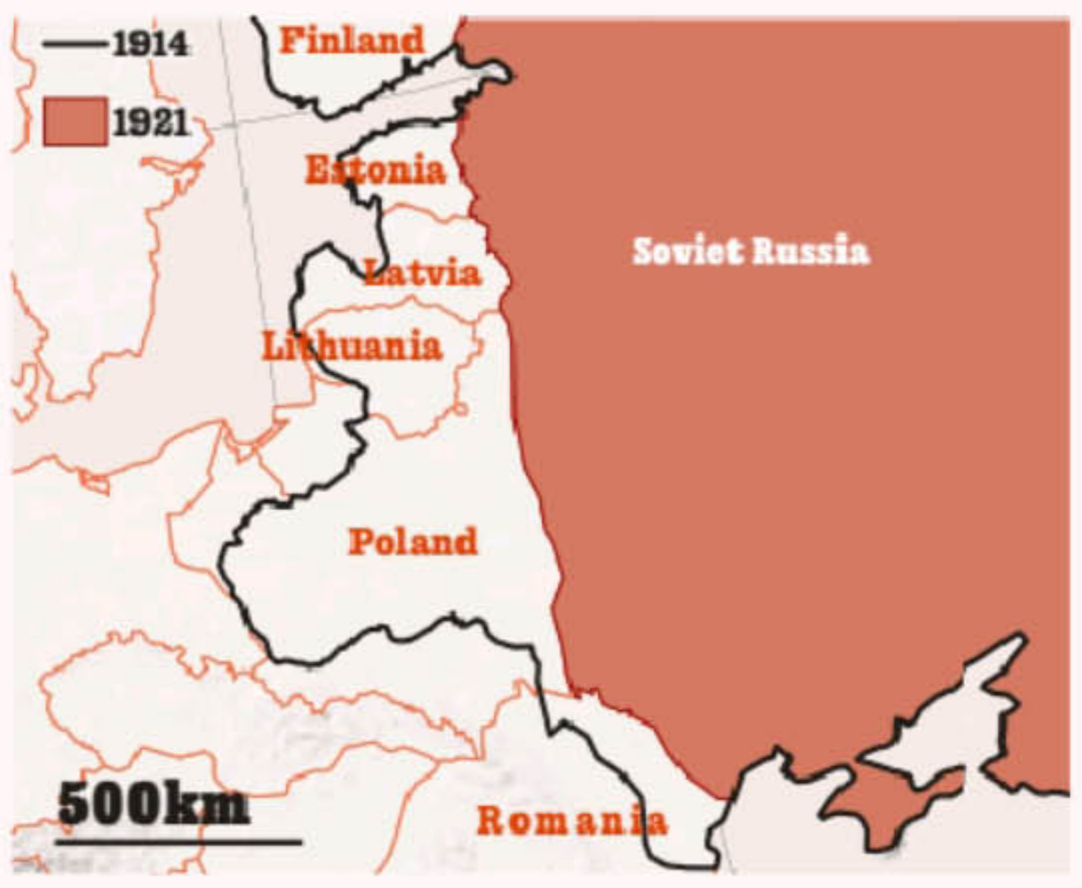
Germany surrendered significant territory, notably to France, Belgium and Poland, which re-emerged as an independent state after 123 years. East Prussia remained part of Germany; Northern Schleswig joined Denmark

AUSTRO-HUNGARIAN EMPIRE

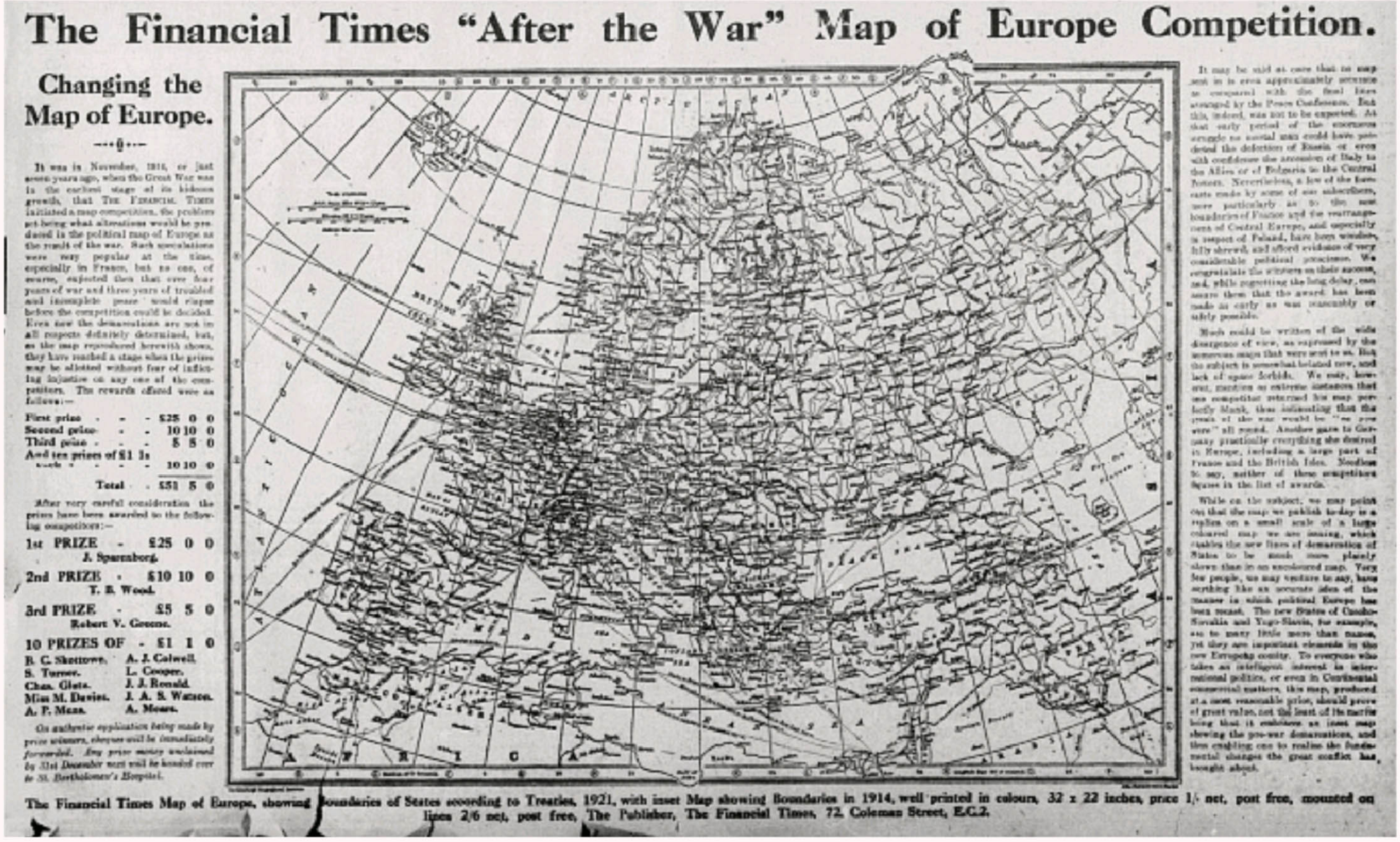


The empire was dismantled. The Czechs and Slovaks joined to form Czechoslovakia, while Serbia and other southern Slavs united to form Yugoslavia. Italy gained Trentino-South Tyrol, Trieste and Istria

RUSSIAN EMPIRE



Following the collapse of the Russian empire, Finland declared independence and Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia emerged as independent Baltic states. Russia also lost land on its western borders to Poland and Romania



The Financial Times "After the War" Map of Europe Competition.

Changing the Map of Europe.

First prize - - -	£25	0	0
Second prize - -	10	10	0
Third prize - - -	5	5	0
And ten prizes of £1 1s each - - - -	10	10	0
Total -	£51	5	0

After very careful consideration the prizes have been awarded to the following competitors:—

1st PRIZE -	£25	0	0
J. Sparenborg.			
2nd PRIZE -	£10	10	0
T. B. Wood.			
3rd PRIZE -	£5	5	0
Robert V. Greene.			
10 PRIZES OF -	£1	1	0

B. C. Skottowe. A. J. Calwell.
S. Turner. L. Cooper.
Chas. Glats. J. J. Ronald.
Miss M. Davies. J. A. S. Watson.
A. P. Mann. A. Moore.

On authentic application being made by prize winners, cheques will be immediately forwarded. Any prize money unclaimed by 31st December next will be handed over to St. Bartholomew's Hospital.

The Financial Times Map of Europe, showing Boundaries of States according to Treaties, 1921, with inset Map showing Boundaries in 1914, well printed in colours, 32 x 22 inches, price 1/- net, post free, mounted on linen 2/6 net, post free, The Publisher, The Financial Times, 72, Coleman Street, E.C.2.

LEFT: in November 1921, the FT published the results of the competition alongside a map of postwar Europe

Or as the FT put it: "No mortal man could have predicted the defection of Russia or even with confidence the accession of Italy to the Allies or of Bulgaria to the Central Powers."

Nevertheless, winners were announced based on who had come closest overall. While no individual map was correct, it was to FT readers' collective credit that several of the "consensus" predictions expressed at the closure of entries in December 1914 came to pass. These included Alsace-Lorraine to France and Trentino to Italy, while Bosnia-Herzegovina's inclusion as part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (later officially Yugoslavia) was essentially correct.

The original FT competition presented the war as very much a continental affair, with Ireland cropped out of the map space. But here too there were to be changes. The week after the results were announced, the Anglo-Irish Treaty signalled the end of British rule in most of Ireland following the Irish War of Independence.

By then, the FT had new owners. But true to its word, the paper awarded prizes in accordance with the amounts announced seven years earlier. However, wartime inflation had eroded the value of the cash rewards significantly. Prices had roughly doubled between 1914 and 1918, driven by massive war spending, money printing and supply issues. By 1921, the extended lifespan of the competition meant that the £25 first prize would be worth around £1,500 today, rather than the £3,700 when first announced.

The list of three winners and 10 runners-up is both frustrating and fascinating. Devoid of any details bar an initial and surname, many winners – S Turner, L Wood – are impossible to trace and verify. They are like so many names etched on war graves across Europe: forever visible, but partially anonymous. But some names do stand out.

'NO MORTAL MAN COULD HAVE PREDICTED THE DEFECTION OF RUSSIA'

Britiffe Constable Skottowe was an Oxford-educated British political and historical writer. Whether he was the author of the "freak" entry that had placed Hanover at the centre of a new German state alongside an independent Poland, we shall never know. But in looking for inspiration, Skottowe could have referred to his own published histories of the Hanoverian kings and British parliament to help imagine future European borders. And if he did, it worked. He won a guinea as one of the runners-up.

As 4th Baron in the Peerage of France – his great-grandfather having been made first Baron by Louis XVIII under the Bourbon Restoration – Skottowe's inclusion in the FT runners-up list is perhaps less surprising than that of Miss M Davies. Despite not being able to vote in a general election at the time of submitting her entry, Davies also earned a guinea for the geopolitical wisdom on her map which, by the time she claimed it, was accompanied by partial voting rights for women.

The first prize of £25 was awarded to J Sparenborg. We cannot be sure whether it was the older Johann Lubbo or his second son, now known as John, who sent in the winning entry. The war and its eventual outcome would have been a topic of very active discussion across the entire first-generation English family who likely still spoke some German at home.

One thing is clear: by the time entries for the FT competition were closed at the end of November 1914, the Sparenborgs had already lost elder son Hans to the Great War. Regardless of who sent the entry, the win must surely have felt pyrrhic. Johann Lubbo had lost a son and grandson. John had lost his only brother and nephew.

Johann Lubbo died a widower in 1927 in Mallorca, Spain, at the age of 77. His daughter Winifred travelled extensively, eventually emigrating to the US in the 1940s. Johann's other daughter Dora had married a German relation and also appears to have left the country. Only John Sparenborg remained, dying in London in 1963. He was divorced, leaving behind a daughter, Elsie, who died just a few years later in 1969.

Today, an elaborate Grade II-listed family tomb in West Norwood cemetery is all that remains of just one of the millions of families whose destiny was shaped by the first world war. Its dedication to Hans includes the inscription "Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori" ("It is sweet and proper to die for one's country"), which Wilfred Owen later famously dismissed as "The old Lie", in his 1917 poem.

It would be interesting to know just how many other readers of the Financial Times entered the competition in 1914 only to lose their own lives or those of loved ones before the results were announced. The casualty rate would surely make it a candidate for one of history's deadliest competitions. FT

Alan Smith is the FT's head of visual and data journalism

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Appetites

Wine

Bordeaux's bittersweet showing

by JANCIS ROBINSON

ILLUSTRATION by DEBORA SZPILMAN

Is 2022 bordeaux really that good? Last month I attended the blind-tasting marathon held every January at Farr Vintners' Thameside offices in London. My conclusion: the 2022 vintage is bittersweet.

The best red wines were really, really good, vindicating 2022's status – along with 2020, 2019 and 2016 – as one of the best vintages of the past 10 years. They were almost uniformly high in fruit concentration, and also in colour and tannin. This was a tasting to blacken the teeth and dry out the palate, which means that the wines should have an impressively long life.

But too many of them cost markedly less now than they did when they were released en primeur in late spring 2023, whereby wines are shown to the trade and media as embryonic cask samples and then offered for sale, long before bottling and sometimes even before final blending. This unfortunate fact has done much to erode wine buyers' confidence in the entire en primeur system.

To take an extreme but sobering example, a case of six bottles in bond of the (exemplary) first-growth Ch Haut-Brion

JANCIS RECOMMENDS

BETTER-VALUE 2022s

Most are offered by the case in bond but a few are offered by the single bottle with all taxes and duties paid.

DRY WHITE

- **Le C de Sec de Ch Closiot 2022 Bordeaux Blanc (13.5%)**
  £18 DUTY PAID HEDONISM,
  £150 FOR 12 FARR VINTNERS

RED

- **Mauvesin Barton 2022 Moulis (14%)**
  £59 FOR SIX VINQUINN,
  £25.14 DUTY PAID PRIVATE CELLAR
- **Montlandrie 2022 Castillon-Côtes de Bordeaux (14%)**
  £180 FOR 12 FARR VINTNERS
- **Cantemerle 2022 Haut-Médoc (13.5%)**
  £210 FOR 12 MORGAN CLASSIC WINES,
  £219 BORDEAUX INDEX AND MANY OTHERS
- **Tronquoy 2022 St-Estèphe (14.5%)**
  £118 FOR SIX FARR VINTNERS
- **Meyney 2022 St-Estèphe (14%)**
  £241 FOR 12 BORDEAUX INDEX
- **Gloria 2022 St-Julien (13%)**
  £144 FOR SIX LAY & WHEELER
- **Lynch Moussas 2022 Pauillac (14%)**
  £164 FOR SIX CRU WORLD WINE,
  £39 DUTY PAID TANNERS
- **Malartic Lagravière 2022 Pessac-Léognan (14.5%)**
  £165 FOR SIX NICKOLLS AND PERKS
- **Labégorce 2022 Margaux (14%)**
  £32.89 DUTY PAID COSTCO
- **Brane-Cantenac 2022 Margaux (14%)**
  £330 FOR SIX CRU WINE

FOR TASTING NOTES, SCORES AND SUGGESTED DRINKING DATES SEE JANCISROBINSON.COM. FOR INTERNATIONAL STOCKISTS SEE WINE-SEARCHER.COM

2022 was initially offered, in 2023, at more than £3,000. Today, the same case is selling at just over £2,000. The price decreases have been particularly marked among the most famous and/or most ambitious châteaux. By contrast, those properties with a reputation for relatively realistic pricing, such as Ch Léoville Barton, Ch Brane-Cantenac and Domaine de Chevalier, have been spared the ignominy of such obviously sluggish demand.

Interestingly, although there was a lot of banter during our three days of tasting, there was very little mention of price. Presumably it was too sore a point given 18 of the 20 tasters gathered were in the trade. However, as Stephen Browett of Farr Vintners added later about a notably weak vintage, "Not as much of a sore point as in 2021 where we felt they [the Bordelais] were clearly being very greedy. 2022 at least is a great vintage."

When it was first shown in April 2023, 2022 clearly had the stuffing and structure needed for potential greatness, but it was a mystery too. Normally after a summer as hot and dry as that one, acid levels would be expected to be dangerously low across the board. I remember quizzing winemakers and proprietors about why the best 2022s seemed so surprisingly refreshing as well as concentrated and could find no one with a very satisfactory answer.

The wine scientists at the University of Bordeaux, who play such an important part in advising local producers, were adamant that, however worryingly low the acid levels naturally present were when the grapes arrived at the cellar, no additional acid should be added, as levels would rise during fermentation. (Carelessly done acidification can result in wines with very obvious, unintegrated acidity.)

When tasting these 2022 reds last month I saw no evidence of acidification.

> When it was first shown, 2022 clearly had the stuffing and structure needed for potential greatness

And certainly there was no need to add any sugar to ferment into extra alcohol such as is sometimes done when grapes are underripe. The 2022s are not wines for the fainthearted. Alcohol levels in the reds were rarely below 14 per cent, and on the right bank often 15 per cent. In three cases, including the extremely delicious St-Émilion Ch Valandraud (which showed so well once bottled in 2024 too), alcohol levels on the label were as much as 15.5 per cent. This was another conundrum about these 2022s – and indeed about wines today in general rather than, say, 10 years ago – high-alcohol wines are no longer dogged by an off-puttingly hot sensation at the end of the tasting experience.

On the right bank, there were only three wines with as little as 13.5 per cent alcohol – Chx Cheval Blanc and Quintus in St-Émilion, and Beauregard in Pomerol. Whereas four left-bank wines were just 13 per cent, including the sister St-Julien châteaux St Pierre and Gloria, both of which showed particularly well.

Of the reds, the only wines I found disappointing were the lesser St-Émilions, which didn't seem to have enough of a core of fruit to withstand all that tannin in the long term. But nowadays the best St-Émilions, such as Angélus, Ausone, Belair Monange, Canon, Cheval Blanc, Clos Fourtet, Figeac, Pavie, Tertre Rôteboeuf, Troplong Mondot and Valandraud, are great wines with none of the overdone oak and

FIRST SIP

ISN'T BORDEAUX A RED WINE?

Admittedly more than 85 per cent of Bordeaux's wine is red but dry whites, and rosés to a certain extent, are on the rise. The main grape variety is Sauvignon Blanc, often blended with the Sauternes grape Sémillon and Sauvignon Gris. The Entre Deux Mers region produces a lot of light, dry, aromatic, crisp white wine with the simple Bordeaux appellation. But the classiest dry white, invariably oaked, has always come from the Pessac-Léognan appellation south of the city of Bordeaux, from châteaux that have traditionally made both reds and dry whites.

This is now being challenged by a wide range of dry whites made from grapes that previously made sweet wines in Sauternes and Barsac, south of Pessac-Léognan. They are increasingly common because sweet wines in general, and sweet white bordeaux in particular, are so difficult to sell.

Another new development is the host of smart red-wine châteaux now producing a white wine. Pavillon Blanc de Château Margaux, Haut-Brion Blanc and La Mission Haut-Brion Blanc, which used to be called Laville Haut-Brion, were the prototypes but they have been joined by rather fresher, simpler dry whites from the famous red-wine likes of Chx Cheval Blanc, Cos d'Estournel, Lafleur, Lagrange, Lynch Bages, Mouton, Palmer, Talbot and many more. Most are sold with the appellation Bordeaux Blanc but a new one, Médoc Blanc, was created last year.

extraction that used to be all too common in the appellation.

Pomerol used to outrank St-Émilion in blind tastings of this sort but the lesser 2022 Pomerols seemed to lack a bit of energy, even if all the famous names – Eglise Clinet, L'Evangile, Lafleur, Le Pin, Petrus, Trotanoy, Vieux Château Certan – were impressive. In fact, along with left-bank first growths Chx Haut-Brion, Mouton and Margaux, Eglise Clinet and Petrus were my favourite wines of the three days.

The Ch Margaux was so intensely rich and dramatic, I could easily have taken it for Petrus. Mouton on the other hand seemed a bit more backward than usual but was beautifully mineral and saline while Haut-Brion was more classic with lovely freshness and a silky texture. Lafite and Latour displayed their usual finesse and rigour, respectively.

Both Pauillac and Margaux were excellent in general, with St-Julien, usually a favourite appellation in this marathon, tasting a little less classic and much richer than usual with less energy overall than the wines from the Margaux appellation. A real star, for both me and the group, was Margaux's Ch Brane-Cantenac, which was already more approachable than most but will surely last into the 2050s too. This vintage was a standout in my colleague James Lawther MW's 2025 vertical tasting of Brane-Cantenac.

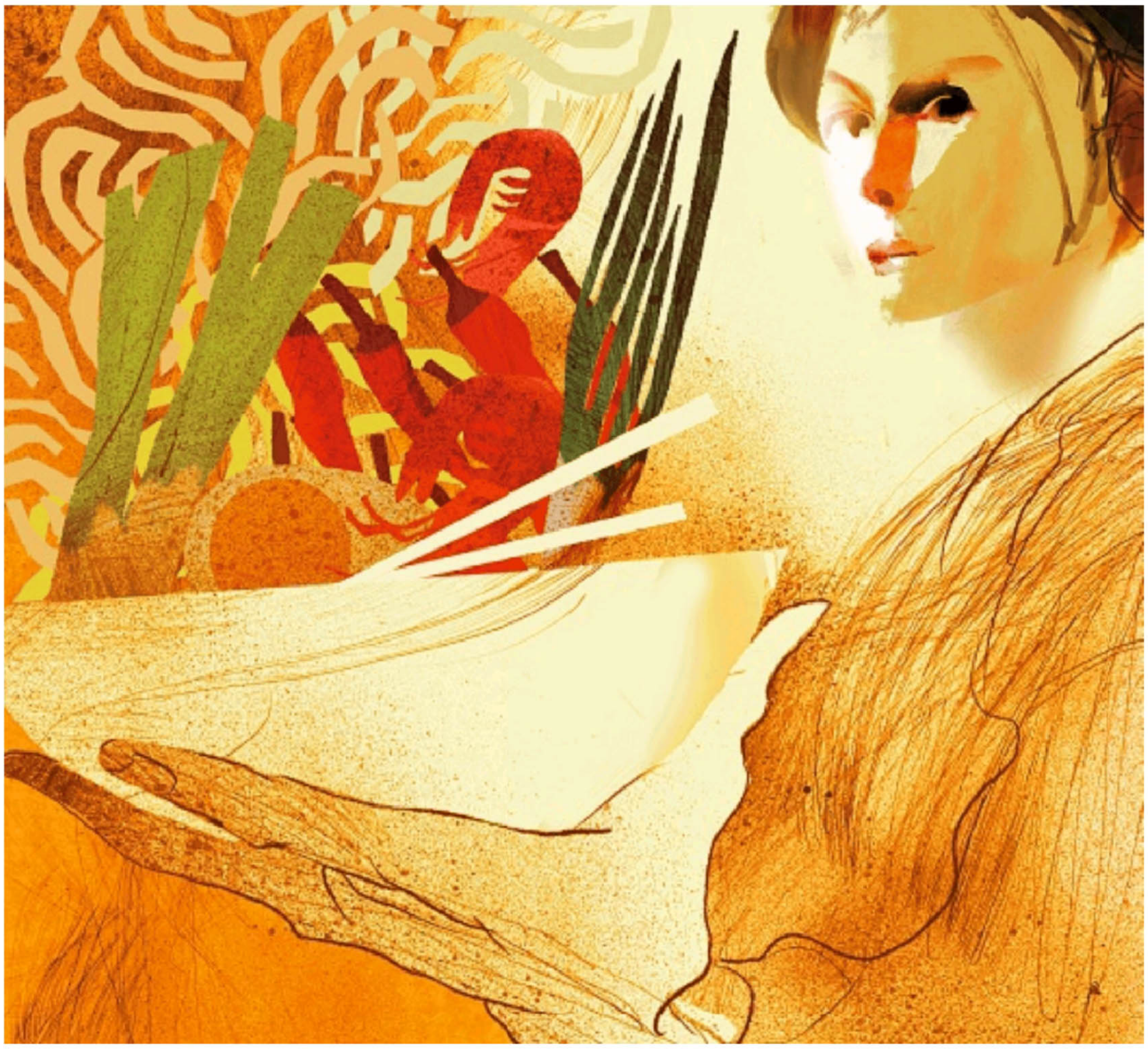
For the group as a whole, stars were Chx Cheval Blanc and Eglise Clinet on the right bank and the wines from the Haut-Brion stable and Domaine de Chevalier in Pessac-Léognan. The group's favourite St-Julien was Ducru Beaucaillou, whereas mine were, equally, Gloria, Las Cases, Léoville Barton and Talbot.

The group's favourite St-Estèphe was Montrose, while I was more taken in this vintage by Cos d'Estournel and Meyney. Stunning Pauillacs, other than the first growths, were Forts de Latour, Grand Puy Lacoste, Pichon Baron and the Lynch Bages, which was the group favourite.

Whites were, as expected, less impressive in this hot, dry year. I'm a big Sauternes fan, but it seemed as though only the most ambitious properties managed sufficient freshness in a vintage with sky-high sugar levels. Doisy-Védrines, La Tour Blanche, Suduiraut and Yquem had much more interest than most.

The increasing number of dry wines being made at Sauternes châteaux now were much better than in the past, although C de Sec du Ch Closiot, the favourite of all of us, was made by a recent incomer from Burgundy, Jean-Marie Guffens.

As for the traditional dry whites, we tasted mainly Pessac-Léognans plus whites from the first growths. They were better than expected from such a hot vintage, although they are not great value compared with the best oaked Sauvignons from elsewhere in the wine world. FT



Review

Sông Quê Phở Bar, Shoreditch

by JAY RAYNER

ILLUSTRATION *by* DANIEL EGNEUS

Challenging times demand challenging ideas, so here's one: dinner at the Sông Quê Phở Bar should be available on the NHS. You turn up looking sorry for yourself, hand over a prescription, and in return they give you a steaming bowl of fragrant Vietnamese noodle soup. Suddenly the world is a better place. If their pristine, limpid broths cannot be proved to have a genuine antibiotic effect, it's only because the tests are wonky. In these dark, dank months when hospital Accident and Emergency departments are complaining of being overwhelmed by people presenting with coughs and hiccups, a prescription for phở is surely the solution. I'm not even waiting for the health establishment to catch up. I'm prescribing it to myself. Although I accept that, for now, I may have to self-fund.

Downstairs in the basement dining room, next to the kitchen where pots of broth steam relentlessly like cooling towers, are a couple of tables stacked with plump bouquets of flowers. The Phở Bar has been open for just two weeks and these blooms, only now starting to wilt, are a marker of the cheerleading that marked the unlocking of its doors. It is an offshoot after almost 24 years of the Sông Quê Café, a much-adored family-run restaurant a little further north on the Kingsland Road, where London's Vietnamese cafés have long

FIND IT

SÔNG QUÊ PHỞ BAR

44 Commercial Street, London E1 6LT
020 4585 0341
songque.co.uk

Small plates £7-£10
Pho, bowls and rice plates £15-£16.50

clustered. That place started as a shop selling Vietnamese CDs and DVDs to the local community. Later the couple who ran it, Lot Van Pham and his wife Anh Phuoc, launched a new business offering an extensive menu of food from the old country rather than its culture. At the café they serve grilled beef wrapped in betel leaf, whole crispy sea bream with mango and fish sauce and bánh khọt, which they describe as savoury prawn cupcakes, among many other lovely sounding things.

LOT VAN PHAM DIED IN 2021 BEFORE he'd achieved his ambition: to open a café with a shorter menu focused on phở, those endlessly comforting bowls of clear beef broth, swimming with noodles, heavy with aromatics and much more besides. It is dish as cultural artefact, a marker of identity, even though its origins, probably somewhere at the start of the 20th century, are argued over. In one story, the French colonial occupiers indulged their taste for beef from cattle which had previously been seen locally only as draught animals. That resulted in a supply of bones which had to go somewhere, that somewhere being the pot which was never allowed to boil, hence the broth's clarity. Phở is eaten for breakfast or for lunch or for dinner or whenever a fragile excuse can be manufactured.

We eat ours at the counter upstairs and talking to our waiter, a member of the extended family, it becomes clear this restaurant really is both a tribute to Lot Van's memory as much as a business. They want to do right by him, to celebrate the intense, restorative joys of phở, and they have. The original café has a brightly lit canteen vibe; this has a softer, boudoir feel, especially at night. It's dressed in soothing shades of emerald and olive, and there are dangling lamps that drop pools of light on to the surface of those broths, where brilliant green ribbons of sliced spring onions bob gently and droplets of fat sparkle like jewels. There are ivory threads of rice noodle and slices of still-rare beef, although you can have your meat well done or accessorised with folds of tripe and jellied pieces of long-cooked tendon for those with a taste for the defiantly animal.

Versions with chicken, prawns and tofu are available and with them comes a plate of regally purple Thai basil, bean sprouts and red chilli for optional heat. They bring squeezy bottles of sriracha and hoisin and invite you to get to work. There are other great things. We have plump prawn summer rolls, the squeakily fresh seafood visible through the white translucent skins. It arrives with a spicy peanut sauce to drag them through. There are curls of salt and pepper squid in a shattering batter, and whole barbecued quails, slicked with honey and spice, to be eaten with your hands. Alongside the phở list, there is also bun bo hue, a spicier noodle soup, made with the addition of shrimp paste and lemongrass to flavour the broth, and round slices of a smooth pork sausage. Or you could have a rice bowl, layered with chicken thigh, smeared in a hefty lemongrass paste and grilled with, on the side, a little dish of sweet-sour chilli sauce to lubricate everything.

But the phở really is the point. The bar's location on the edge of the City marks it out as a place to which the overworked and under-slept could retreat, searching for hope in the depths of a perfect noodle soup at a modest price. Order a jasmine lychee highball, or a bottle of the extremely good-value Chablis or get your kicks courtesy of a Vietnamese coffee. I am there shortly before the lunar new year, the celebrations of which start next week on February 17. We tend to focus on Chinese New Year but it is marked in different ways across Asia, and as Tết in Vietnam. It's a time for family reunions and feasts. I ask if they have any plans, but they admit they haven't thought that far ahead. Perhaps the mere opening is this year's celebration. There is no dessert list, at least not yet, so we head round the corner to Brick Lane and the utilitarian pleasures of a dessert bar, where cheap ice creams and corn-syrup-based sauces are piled one atop the other. It occurs to me that these too should be available on the NHS, to cheer people up, our mental health being as important as our physical. But I'd happily settle for just the phở being on prescription. It's an idea whose time has come. FT

jay.rayner@ft.com

Recipe Club

A meal for your main squeeze

by HONEY & CO

PHOTOGRAPHY *by* PATRICIA NIVEN

Restaurateurs love Valentine's Day. In the February doldrums – traditionally one of the slowest restaurant months – a busy night like this makes a huge difference. And if it falls on a weekend, you can stretch it through to three days. On the other hand, chefs tend to hate it. There will usually be a special menu of crowd pleasers that need to be prepped and two sittings booked on each table (more in particularly ambitious or less-conscientious establishments), which is made all the more difficult when the entire restaurant is filled with two tops. We belong in both camps, developing a love-hate relationship with this holiday over the years.

Our ideal Valentine's table is not for two, but for many loved ones, friends old and new, in ones or twos (or threes, if this is what they are into), family, kids, pets... we want as much love as we can get at this dark time of year, and we want the bright, light, sweet and hopeful scent of oranges to be in every mouthful. They are, for us, like love in fruit form: it is in your fruit bowl all year round, but peaks in the dark of winter, there for you when you need it the most.

This menu will serve six to eight, halve or double as needed. It works really well together, but you can, of course, pick, choose and make your own.

By Itamar Srulovich. Recipes by Sarit Packer

SALAD OF ORANGES, SWEET POTATOES AND CASHEW CRUNCH DRESSING

A light, colourful salad of all the orange hues and sweetness of the season. The crunchy dressing adds spice, texture and a whole lot of fun.

For the salad
- 2 sweet potatoes (about 500g), washed
- 2 tbs olive oil
- 1 tsp flaky sea salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 3 strips of orange peel (use a peeler)
- 3 oranges, blood oranges for preference
- 1 ripe persimmon

For the dressing
- 4 tbs vegetable oil
- 3 strips of orange peel
- 1 banana shallot, peeled and thinly sliced into rounds
- 1 red chilli, thinly sliced (remove the seeds for less spicy results)
- 2 cloves of garlic, peeled and sliced
- 2 tbs sesame seeds
- 100g cashew nuts, roughly chopped
- 1 tsp sea salt
- 3 tbs sherry vinegar

1. Preheat the oven to 220C with fan assist.
2. Cut the sweet potatoes, with the skin on, into slices half a centimetre thick (the easiest way to do this is with a mandolin if you have one) and place in a large baking tray. Add the olive oil, sea salt, pepper and strips of orange peel, mix well to coat, then spread out so they are in as much of a single layer as possible.
3. Roast for 15 minutes, shake the pan a little (but don't stir), return to the oven for a further five minutes, then remove. The sweet potato should be golden and soft, roast for a couple more minutes if they look too pale.
4. Peel the oranges and slice into rounds and do the same to the persimmon. Then layer all the slices of the cooked sweet potatoes and the fruits on a large flat serving platter. Cover and set aside until serving (it will be fine left for a few hours but don't put in the fridge or it will become gummy).
5. Make the dressing. Heat the oil in a frying pan and add the strips of orange skin. Cook for a minute, then add the shallot, stir well and cook for another minute. Add the chilli and garlic then cook for a further minute. Finally, add the sesame seeds, cashews and sea salt, then mix well for two to three minutes until the sesame seeds turns golden in colour.
6. Remove the dressing from the heat, and add the vinegar. Pour all over the platter and serve immediately.

POT-ROASTED BEEF WITH ORANGE AND SWEET ONION GRAVY

This is a gentle, aromatic pot roast rather than a heavy braise. Orange zest and peel lift the richness of the beef, while long-cooked onions give the gravy its depth and sweetness.

For the beef
- 2kg rolled joint of beef suitable for braising (chuck, brisket or silverside all work well)
- 1 large onion, quartered
- 2 celery sticks, cut into large pieces
- 1 carrot, roughly chopped
- 1 orange, zested then sliced (reserve the zest for the marinade)
- 250ml water

For the marinade
- 1 tsp fine sea salt
- 1 tsp chilli flakes
- 2 tbs dark soy sauce
- Zest of an orange

For the gravy
- 1 tbs butter
- 2 large onions, thinly sliced
- 5cm piece of ginger, finely grated
- 1 red chilli, thinly sliced
- 1 orange
- 250ml white wine

1. Marinate the beef. Mix the marinade ingredients and rub them thoroughly over the beef. Leave to marinate for at least one hour or, ideally, overnight in the fridge.
2. Preheat the oven to 160C with fan assist. Set a large, heavy ovenproof pan over medium-high heat and sear the beef until well browned on all sides. Remove and set aside. Add the onion, celery and carrot to the pan and cook briefly until lightly coloured. Return the beef to the pan, add the sliced orange and water, cover with a lid and transfer to the oven.
3. Baste the beef every 30 minutes. Cooking time will depend on the cut: about 90 minutes for chuck or silverside, and up to two hours for brisket or shin. The beef is ready when a knife slides in without resistance.
4. While the beef cooks, make the gravy. Melt the butter in a saucepan over a low heat. Add the onion, ginger and chilli, and cook gently until the onions are soft and sweet but not coloured. Using a vegetable peeler, remove wide strips of peel from the orange and add them to the pan, reserving the fruit. Pour in the wine and simmer until almost completely reduced, then remove from the heat.
5. When the beef is ready, lift it out of the pan and keep warm. Strain the cooking liquid and add it to the onion mixture, discarding the vegetables. Return the gravy to the heat and reduce until thick and glossy. Halve the reserved orange and squeeze its juice into the gravy.
6. Slice the beef thickly or bring it to the table whole, and serve with the hot gravy spooned generously over the top. This is rich enough to stand alone, but if you insist on a side, a light, unbuttered mash works well.

WINE

Recommending an orange wine with this meal may feel too on the nose, but actually the slight funk, flower and tang of a lot of them will work really well here. We would start with crazy pét nat from Marto and continue with something like Achillée Pépin orange NV, though more traditional meat-adjacent reds will work here as well, think Côte de Rhone or a Garnacha-leaning rioja – a good choice if you want one bottle for the entire meal. For dessert, a chilled bottle of Muscat will sit very nicely, but when does it not?

ORANGE-SCENTED CRÈME CARAMEL WITH CARAMELISED ORANGES

We used a shallow 18cm round tin, but you can use any similarly sized heat-resistant casserole. (You can also bake this in six individual ramekins if you prefer.) For best results, make a day ahead.

For the caramel
- Two oranges
- 120g sugar
- 40ml water

For the set cream
- 350ml full-fat milk
- 120g double cream
- 110g sugar
- Zest from the two oranges
- 2 whole eggs
- 3 egg yolks

1. Zest the oranges (keep the zest for the cream), then peel and cut the skin and pith away so the flesh is exposed. Slice the oranges crosswise (perpendicular to the stem) into five to six slices. Lay them all over the bottom of the ovenproof dish you are using.
2. Mix the sugar and water in a saucepan, making sure the sides are clean. Place on a very high heat and cook without stirring until the sugar starts to colour, then remove from the heat. Swirl the pan around to form an even dark caramel and pour on to the orange slices in the tin. Cool until the caramel is set.
3. Preheat the oven to 160C with fan assist and prepare a deep tray that can easily contain the tin. Set the tin in the tray ready to transfer to the oven. Pre-boil a kettle and make sure you have your ingredients ready for the next two steps, as they need to be done quickly.
4. Heat the cream with the milk, sugar and orange zest, bring to a boil. In the meantime, whisk the eggs with the yolks in a large bowl. As soon as the milk has boiled, pour it over the egg mix and whisk well. Pour through a sieve on to the caramel layer to strain off any egg bits.
5. Fill the bottom tray halfway up with hot water and place in the centre of the oven for 30 minutes, then carefully rotate the tray and cook for another 15 minutes or until it is just set (it will look like a jelly with a little wobble).
6. Remove from the oven but leave in the water to rest for another 15 minutes.
7. Carefully lift out of the water, let it continue to cool at room temperature for about an hour before transferring to the fridge to chill overnight.
8. When it is time to serve, run a thin-bladed knife all around the rim of the tin. As you finish going around, pull the knife carefully towards you a tiny bit, so that its flat edge just pushes the cream a little to the side to form an air bubble. That will help it release to the plate.
9. Place a plate on top and flip them together so the cream pops out on to the plate. It sometimes requires a few seconds, and can be jiggled a little if needed. Serve cold.

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LONDON'S BEST FAMILY-RUN RESTAURANTS

by DARA KLEIN

SWANKY

HIERARCHY OF PLEASURES

SIMPLE

Hunan, Pimlico
The Peng family opened the restaurant in 1982 and have been running it ever since. And it shows. It feels very honest, something built by one family who've perfected their craft over the years. I've only eaten here once, as it's a luxury experience, but I still remember the food, especially the xiao long bao [soup dumplings], which were perfect. I love the "leave-it-to-us" tasting menu and the superb wine list.

Rochelle Canteen, Shoreditch
I have a special love for this restaurant as it was the first professional kitchen I worked in, and it's somewhere I go back to time and again. It's beautiful to see Hector, Margot Henderson's son, take the reins. He's putting his stamp on it while keeping what makes it so great. The last thing I had there was some wonderful smoked cod's roe.

Miga, Hackney
Korean food is one of my favourites and Miga's amazing. Its Japchae, made with sweet potato noodles, is excellent, and there's a milky bone broth dish that has a really clean flavour. The cooking is unashamedly their own, it's how the family cooks and eats. It's a special place, with the dad on the stoves and the kids working the restaurant floor.

Sông Quê Café, Hoxton
This is my most-visited restaurant. Sharlene, the daughter of the original owners, now runs it with her husband and they're such warm people. What draws me back is the broth and the beef wrapped in betel leaves, but it's as much about the atmosphere and service. You can eat well there for less than £20. And it's the perfect place to relax. (See page 37 for Jay Rayner's review of Sông Quê's new phở bar.)

Scotti's, Farringdon
While looking for a space in this area, I'd sometimes visit Scotti's for an escalope sandwich. I wasn't raised with this sort of Italian food, but I appreciate it. It's the sort of decades-old place where you get what you're given.

As told to Josh Barrie. Dara Klein is the chef-founder of Tiella in Hackney

CHEF'S NOTEBOOK

When a Michelin inspector calls

by GEORGE WINTLE

ILLUSTRATION *by* ALICE PIAGGIO

IT'S 1PM DURING A FULLY BOOKED LUNCH service when the host makes a beeline to the kitchen: "The solo diner at table 13 is asking a lot of questions and taking tons of photos. I think it's Michelin."

Unlike the TikTok influencer on table six hoping to pay for their meal with "exposure", Michelin's anonymous critics and inspectors don't disclose their presence. Still, some restaurants try to catch them out. Entire teams scrutinise email addresses, LinkedIn profiles and Instagram activity in an effort to figure out who's coming in and how to tailor the experience accordingly. We like to call these "guest enhancement checks".

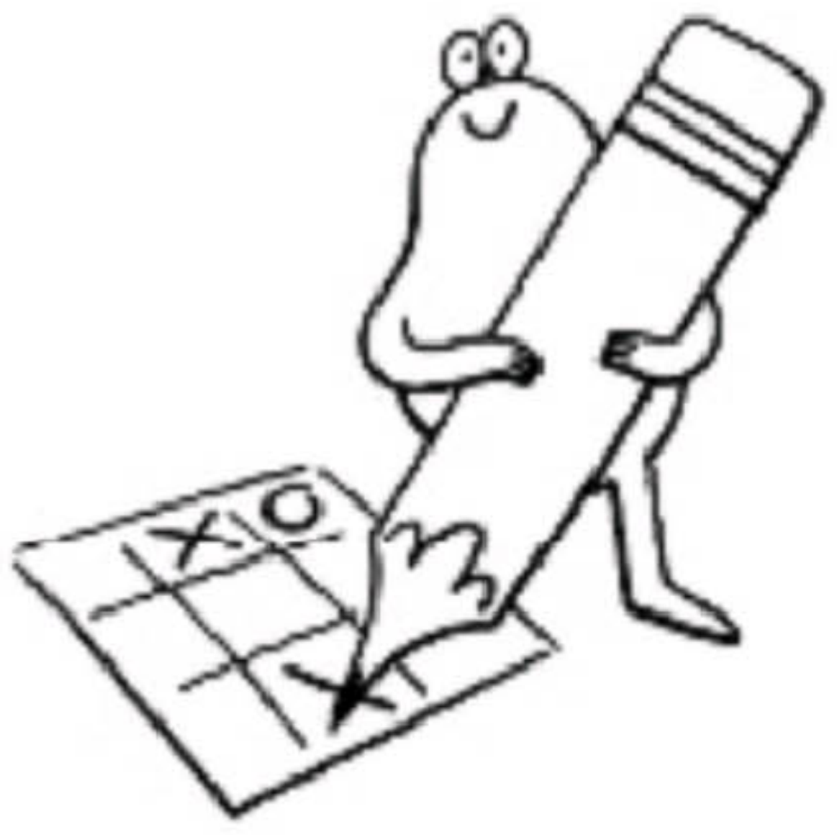
You can always tell when one of these mystery shoppers is suspected of being in a restaurant. The mood shifts instantly. You can feel the tension rise. The chef starts tasting every sauce, purée and ice cream as if they haven't eaten in three days. Meanwhile, the head waiter will glance under the table for a deliberately dropped fork – a (possibly apocryphal) Michelin trick to test how attentive the front-of-house team is. In the kitchen, we start to set aside all of the choicest portions of food: the fattest white asparagus, the plumpest pigeon, the perfectly bloomed wild garlic flowers.

Restaurant owners and staff spend their life trying to unlock the secrets of this somewhat mercurial award body, which gave out its latest round of accolades at a ceremony in Dublin. I think that's what makes its stars a little sweeter than a gloating review from an influencer. Even after a decade spent working in high-end restaurants around the world, being a chef in the kitchen during such high-stakes moments always feels like sitting in the waiting room for a job interview I've worked my whole career for. When the inevitable "main course away on table 13" is called, it's my time to shine. I feel like a brain surgeon in an operating room, where one wrong move could be life or death. It's too late to remake the purée or cook the pigeon again. I watch the plates leave the pass and hope I've brought my best to the table. Days of hard work, gone in minutes.

All food critics, Michelin or not, possess the power to send restaurant teams into that crisis mode and, as such, will undoubtedly receive more attention and care than other guests. The water glasses will never be less than half full. The service will be seamless. The chef will visit the table more than once, perhaps offering some tableside saucing or carving to add theatrics. It's a performance that radiates opulence but is carefully restrained. Nobody likes a try-hard.

The catch? All of that effort could've been for nothing. That solo diner at table 13 asking questions and snapping photos turned out to be Janet from Birmingham, in town for a business trip. FT

George Wintle is a chef based in London



GAMES

MINI CROSSWORD

NO 96 SET BY SOLOMON

8 clues:
2 straightforward
2 general knowledge
2 cryptic
2 anagrams

1		2		3		4
	■		■		■	
5						
	■		■		■	
6						
	■		■		■	
7						

ACROSS
1 Reacted (7)
5 Looking through town (7)
6 Hollow spaces connected with the inside of the nose (7)
7 Shakin' ______, Welsh pop star (7)

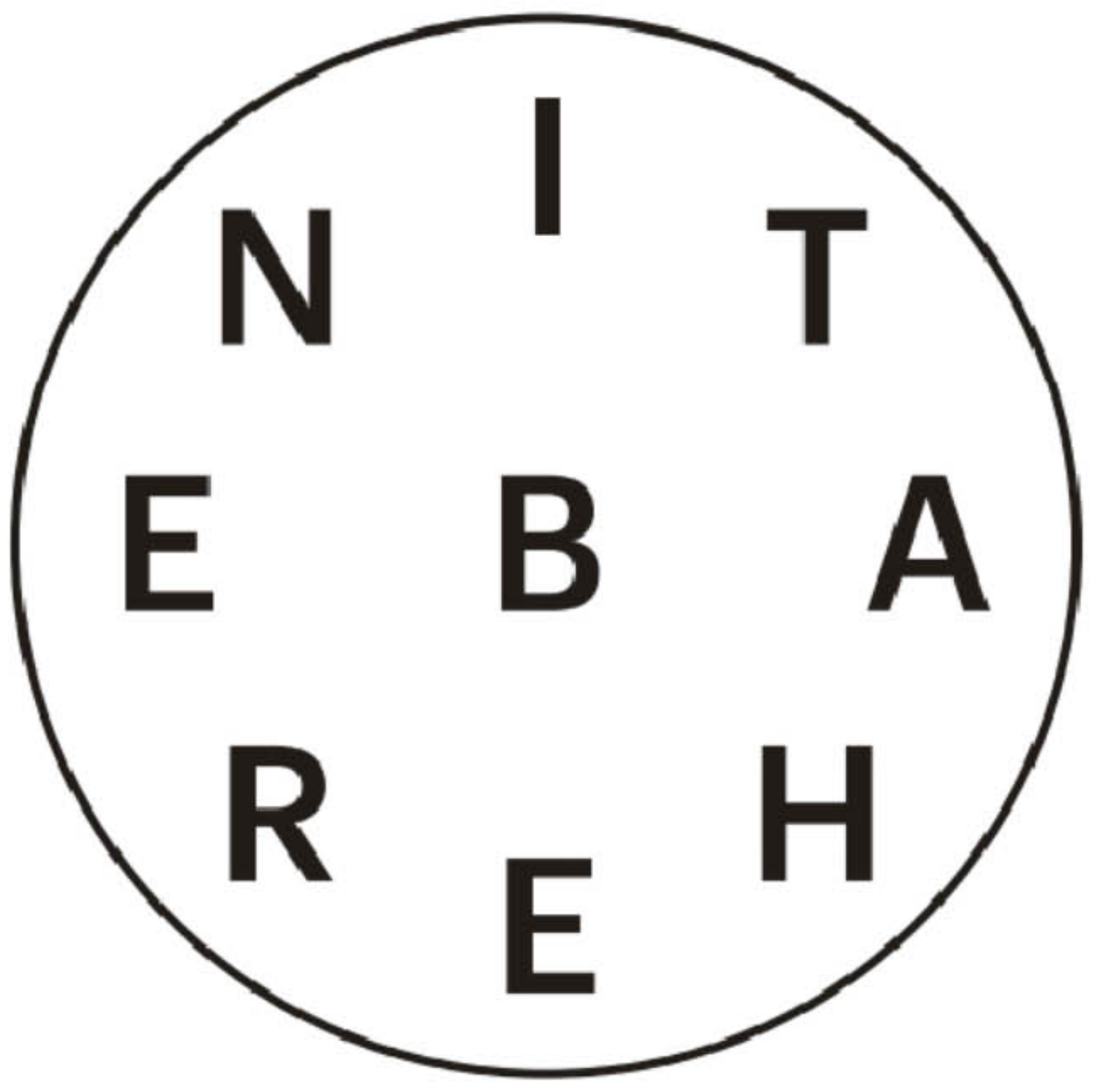
DOWN
1 Process (7)
2 Apprentice (7)
3 Put out again (7)
4 Understands summaries (7)

Access FT crosswords from the past 30 days – Cryptic, Polymath, Weekend and Sunday Puzzles – on ft.com/crosswordapp

WORD CIRCLE

NO 96

How many words can you form that use the centre letter plus two or more of the other letters? No letter may be used more times than it appears within the circle. There is one word that uses all nine letters.



SCORING
GOOD – 20
GREAT – 30
AMAZING – 40

BINARY PUZZLE

NO 96

Place 0 or 1 in every empty square so there is an equal number of each digit in every row and column. In any row or column, there must be no more than two of the same digit in succession.

1				0	0	1	
						1	1
0		1	0	1		0	
1						1	
	1						0
	0		0	1	0		1
1	1						
	1	0	1				0

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SOLUTIONS

FOR ISSUE DATE FEBRUARY 7

Mini Crossword No 95

T	E	T	A	N	U	S
R	■	A	■	A	■	A
A	L	L	U	R	E	D
F	■	L	■	R	■	D
F	R	I	G	A	T	E
I	■	N	■	T	■	S
C	O	N	T	E	S	T

Binary Puzzle No 95

0	0	1	0	1	0	1	1
0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1
1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0
0	0	1	1	0	1	0	1
1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
0	0	1	1	0	1	0	1
1	1	0	1	0	1	0	0
1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0

Word Circle No 95

girth, girths, gist, grim, grist, grit, grits, him, his, hit, hits, hoist, ism, its, might, mirth, mist, mitt, mitts, moist, omit, omits, rig, right, **rightmost**, rights, rigs, rim, rims, riot, riots, shim, shirt, sigh, sight, sir, sit, smith, stir, thirst, this, tight, tights, tit, trig, trim, trims, trio, trios

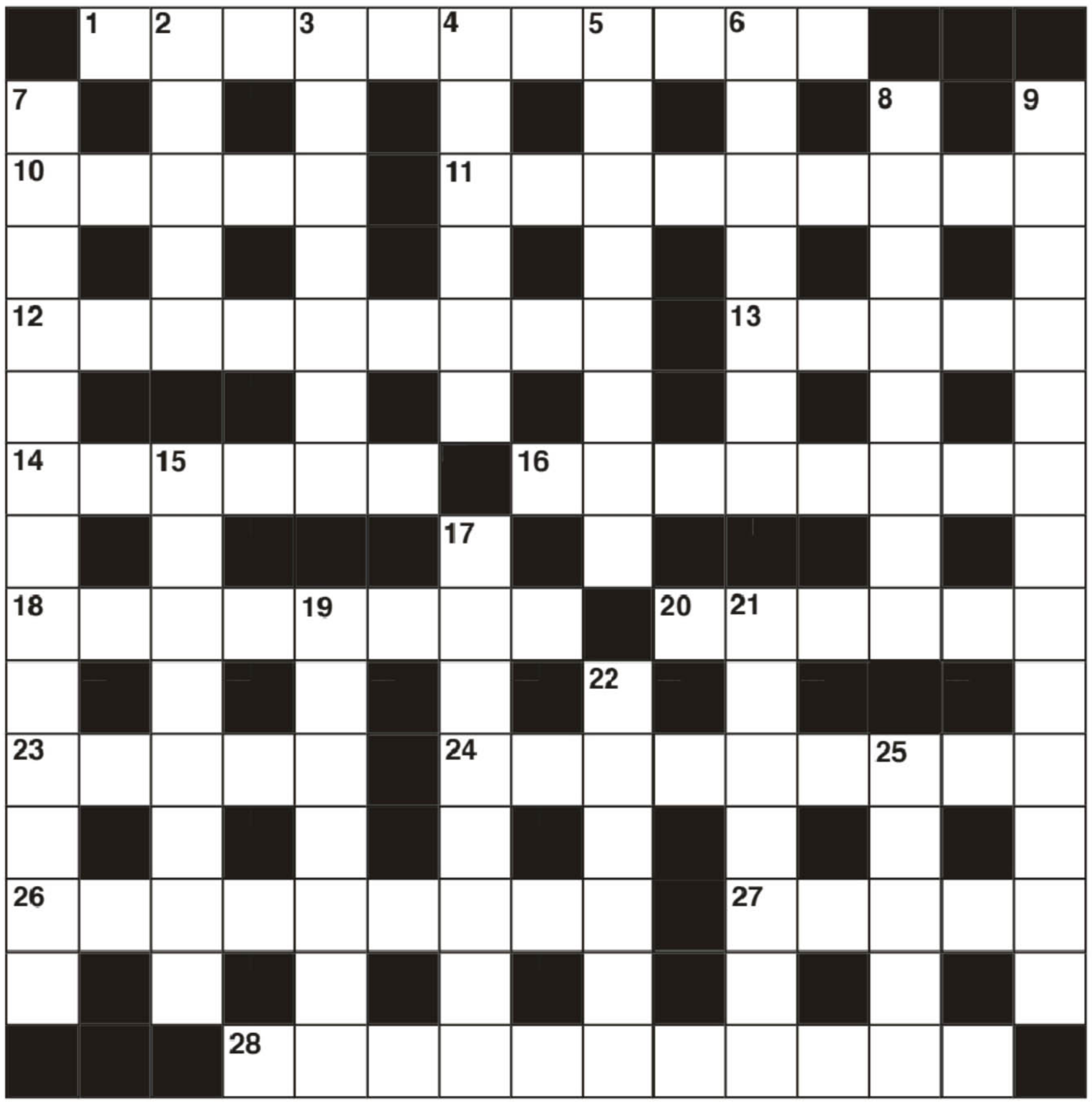
THIS WEEK'S QUIZ ANSWERS

A round on the links
The link for Valentine's Day was terms of endearment
1. Alan Sugar
2. *A Doll's House* (Ibsen)
3. *The Blue Angel*
4. Petal 5. Pumpkin
6. "I Got You Babe" (Sonny and Cher, UB40 with Chrissie Hynde)
7. Captain Darling 8. Milk and honey
9. Baby boomers 10. *Beloved*

The picture round
Rosie Jones + Jim Dale = Rosie and Jim

THE CROSSWORD

NO 780 SET BY ALDHELM



The Across clues are straightforward, while the Down clues are cryptic.

ACROSS

- 1 Digital storage medium (7, 4)
- 10 Musical drama (5)
- 11 Untruthful (9)
- 12 Driver (9)
- 13 Follower of the ancient philosophy of Zeno (5)
- 14 Loiter, walk slowly (6)
- 16 Feel resentful about (8)
- 18 Film boss (8)
- 20 Picturesque (6)
- 23 Thigh bone (5)
- 24 TV, radio, newspapers etc (4, 5)
- 26 Quality, property (9)
- 27 Amidst (5)
- 28 Brackets (11)

DOWN

- 2 Round character with big old character (5)
- 3 Fun-loving when full and pay out (7)
- 4 Copper dagger's alternate parts get left for weapon (6)
- 5 Diplomatic secret I'd blown apart (8)
- 6 Starting price son arranged with alternative finance (7)
- 7 Give up criminal leader – one defected, perhaps, grabbing American leader (7, 6)
- 8 Broken bone – held and bound (8)
- 9 Financial establishment's regular conversation (5, 8)
- 15 Make two changes without right colleague (8)
- 17 Party trick involves second little creature (8)
- 19 Island up in the Potomac is rocky (7)
- 21 Fellow communist's secret message holds weapon up (7)
- 22 Exercise stops cast switching position (6)
- 25 Doctor a modern weapon (5)

Crossword No 779

A	T	O	N	C	E	■	G	E	N	E	R	O	U	S
E	■	L	■	R	■	■	■	A	■	S	■	R	■	I
R	O	D	E	O	■	C	L	U	T	C	H	I	N	G
O	■	S	■	C	■	A	■	D	■	A	■	O	■	N
F	A	C	T	U	A	L	■	E	X	P	E	N	S	E
O	■	H	■	S	■	E	■	T	■	E	■	■	■	T
I	C	O	N	■	I	N	D	O	L	E	N	T	■	■
L	■	O	■	■	■	D	■	I	■	■	■	H	■	B
■	■	L	A	U	D	A	B	L	E	■	F	U	R	Y
B	■	■	■	P	■	R	■	E	■	P	■	M	■	D
R	O	S	T	R	U	M	■	T	H	I	M	B	L	E
I	■	T	■	I	■	O	■	T	■	C	■	N	■	S
E	M	E	R	G	E	N	C	E	■	K	H	A	K	I
F	■	E	■	H	■	T	■	■	■	L	■	I	■	G
S	T	R	E	T	C	H	Y	■	M	E	R	L	I	N

GETTY IMAGES; ALAMY

A ROUND ON THE LINKS

BY JAMES WALTON

All the answers here are linked in some way. Once you've spotted the connection, any you didn't know the first time around should become easier.

1 *What You See Is What You Get* is the 2011 autobiography of which British businessman?

2 In 1884, the first British production of which Scandinavian play was adapted so that, unlike in the original, "the curtain fell on a happy home"?

3 Marlene Dietrich first performed "Falling in Love Again (Can't Help It)" in which film?

4 What's the word for one part of a flower's corolla?

5 What's the most popular type of pie served at US Thanksgiving dinners?

6 Which song was a British number one for a duo in 1965, and for a band with a guest vocalist in 1985?

7 Which of the main characters in *Blackadder Goes Forth* has the first name Kevin?

8 In the Hebrew Bible, Canaan (*pictured*) is described 16 times as "the land of" what?

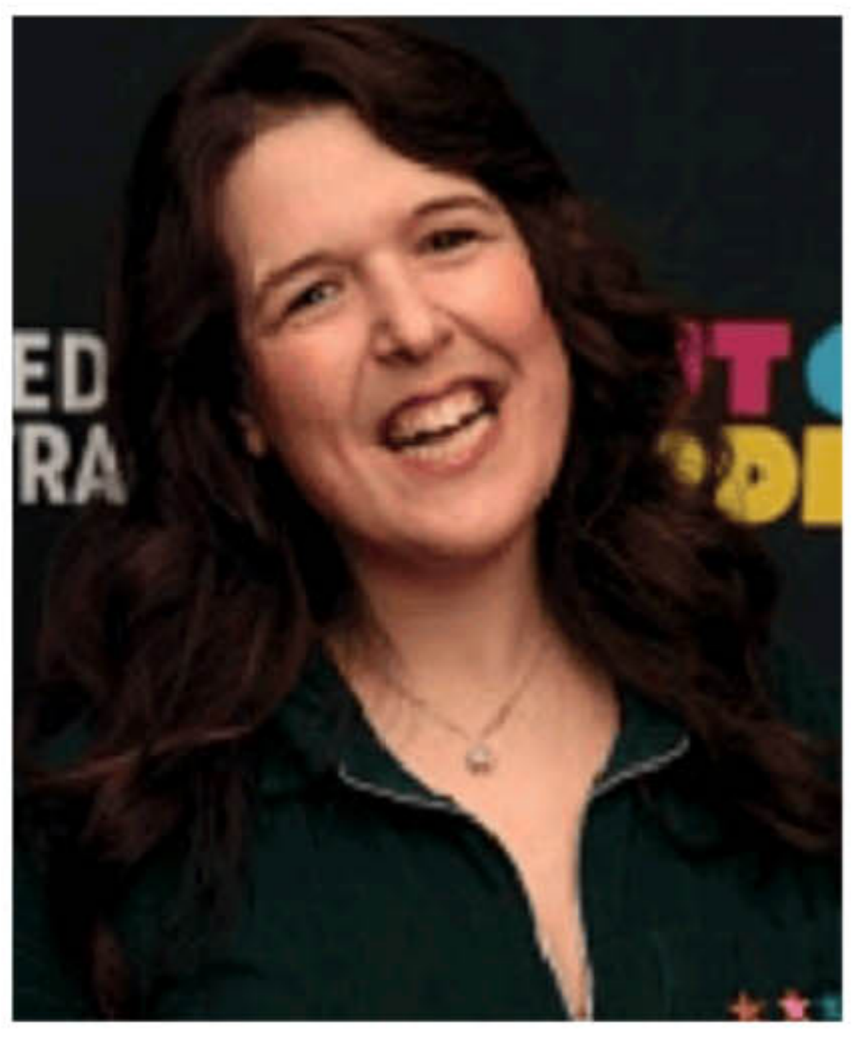
9 In popular demographic history, which two-word term is used for the people who came between the Silent Generation and Generation X?

10 In 2006, which book by Toni Morrison was voted by a panel of critics, editors and authors in The New York Times the best American novel of the previous 25 years?

THE PICTURE ROUND

BY JAMES WALTON

Who or what do these pictures add up to?



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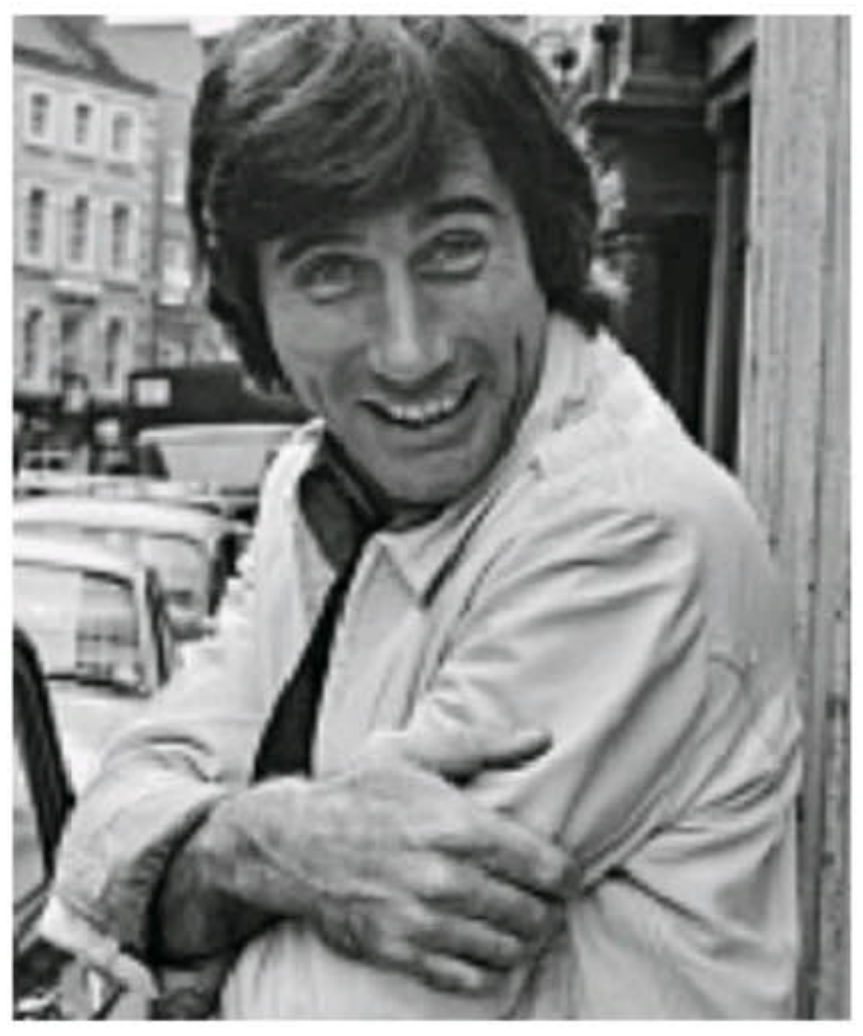

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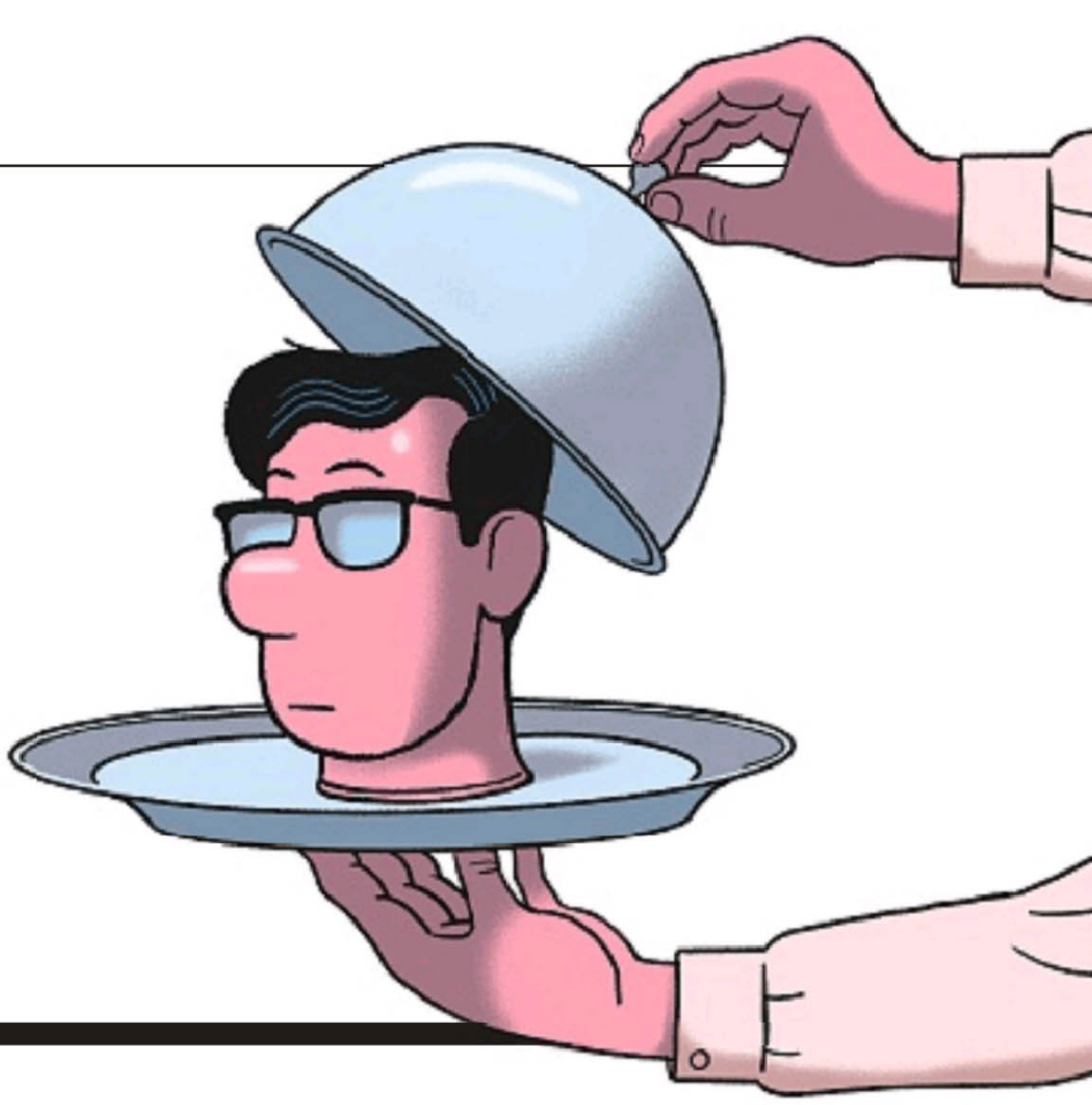
Answers opposite

What Fresh Hell

Should restaurants crack down on the old?

Work, life and family dilemmas solved by *Robert Shrimsley*



Never eat with children or animals. For some people this is a defining restaurant rule. They do not want their meal spoiled by whining or wandering children. Others are discombobulated by dogs, either through fear or the sense that a place may be less sanitary for allowing pooches to loiter hopefully under the tables.

The child issue has been taken up by the former newsreader Jan Leeming, who posted on X about being made to feel bad by restaurant staff when she complained that her meal was "slightly spoiled" by a screaming child. Perhaps misreading the nation, she then doubled down by suggesting that children needed to be trained "like a dog" before being permitted over the threshold. This was, she later admitted, poorly phrased. Quite right, the last thing you want is trained kids rushing out to pee in the garden when there are perfectly good toilets at hand.

I have, at various stages in my life, been one of those people (the complainers, not the peeing in the garden types). As a young man I found nothing charming about a crying baby or a toddler wandering over to my table, interrupting the meal and forcing me to stop swearing. Then I became a parent. Once I was irritated by dogs in restaurants. Then I became a dog owner.

In other words, how you view this question may well be a function of your life stage. I am now irritated by anything other than the fanciest restaurant spurning my little terrier, who is actually quite the gourmand and very committed to the dining experience. I was similarly outraged, decades ago, by the dirty looks we sometimes got when our generally well-behaved spawn had the temerity to cry during a meal. Sometimes you just want to go to Carluccio's without shelling out for the babysitter. There may be some very high-end places that discourage young children, but who wants to drop that kind of cash on someone for whom Heinz Macaroni Cheese is a *MasterChef* experience?

It is obviously true that parents need to take responsibility for their kids. Table manners ought not to be a luxury item. Shoes should not be on seats. It is not OK to leave them wandering the restaurants just so you can have a few moments of peace.

> Perhaps the untrained elderly should check for signs that kids may be welcome before booking

But there is a difference between badly behaved children and, well, children. The staff attitude may indicate that they felt Leeming's tormentors were in the latter group. It is also occasionally worth remembering the rising panic we felt as parents when the bawling baby would not be pacified. We too well recall the rictus smiles on the faces of the people at the next table who were initially enchanted at the two-year-old saying hello to them but who now feel that the 20th greeting is sufficient.

So Leeming needs to be careful here. Children are generally acknowledged to be socially desirable – at least in the generality. And if much of how we feel about this depends on how recently we can remember being that parent, perhaps she might find people demanding that restaurants start banning grumpy old people.

I would not go so far as to advocate pensioner bans myself, not least because I am nearer in age to the grumpy old person than the screaming child. I may even have reached grumpiness without going through the intermittent stages of ageing. When it came to grouchiness, I was always a bit of a prodigy. And, given the prices in restaurants, older people are probably the only ones who can regularly afford a meal. But frankly isn't every young parent fed up with having their meal spoiled by the snotty glares, tutting and snide comments of old people who have not been trained to tolerate the young? I don't think a global ban is appropriate. It's not fair on the many perfectly tolerant older diners. But to echo Leeming, maybe families should not be taking their elderly relatives out for a meal until they have been schooled on how to behave in restaurants.

The restaurant in question offered a children's menu so perhaps the untrained old should check for signs that rotten kids may be welcome before booking. Those taking the booking would be encouraged to check that older diners have been properly trained unless, of course, this is a pensioner-friendly establishment.

I can't say I favour this. I, for one, want to see the elderly welcomed in all eateries. I offer it only as a reminder that every life stage has the capacity to annoy those not at it. FT

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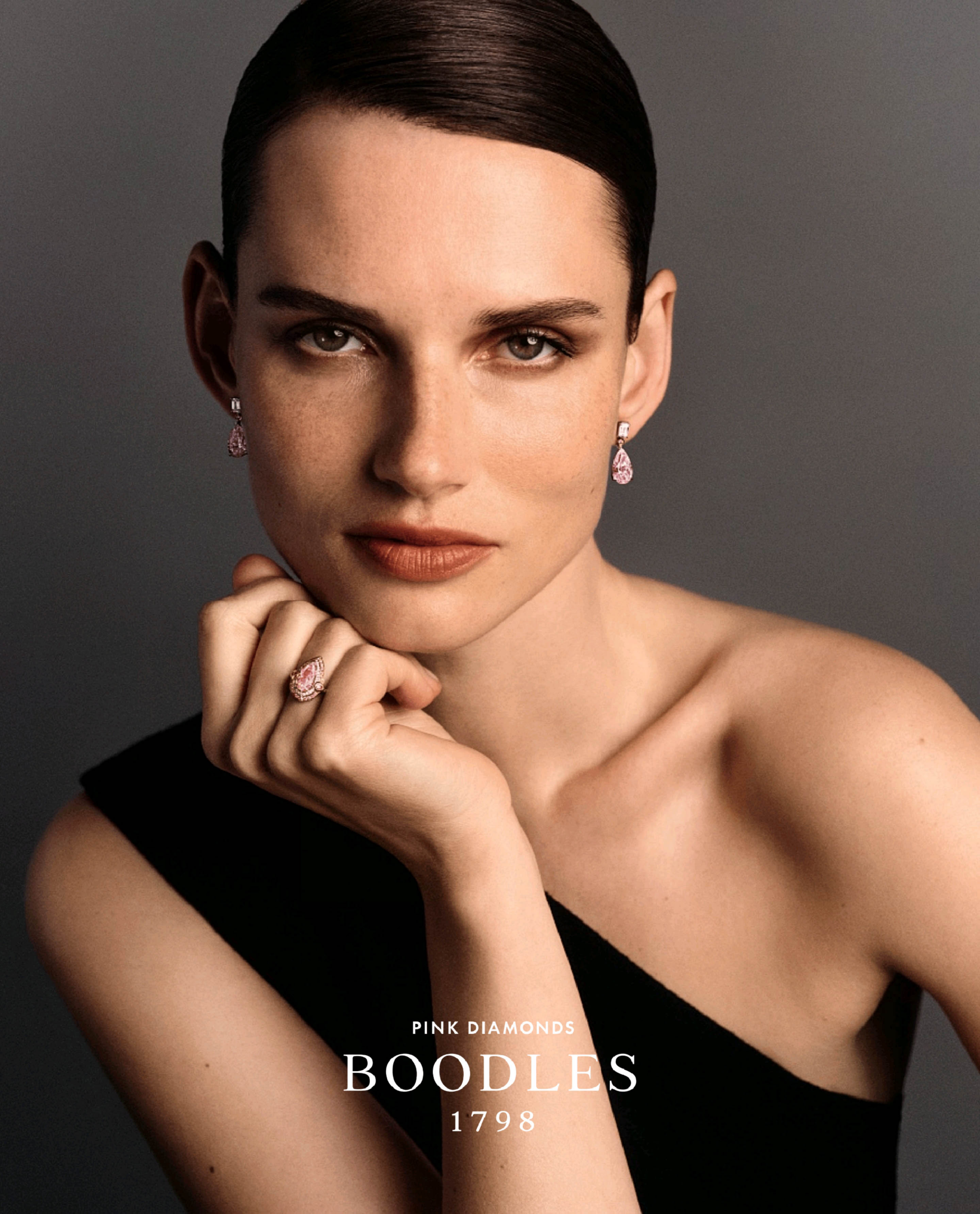
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1798